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ABSTRACT

Seven essays presented at three workshops/conferences examining democratic education in American society are provided. Topics of the three workshop sessions include (1) The Price of Failure: Equality of Educational Opportunity and the Realities of Competition; (2) The Burden of Success: Recruitment and Training of National Elites; and (3) The Possibility of Alternatives: Educational Politics and Social Goals. The two papers presented at the first workshop session are "Institutional Racism: A Barrier to Educational Change" and "Reversing School Failure: Why It Doesn't Happen, Limited Exception Where It Does." Papers presented at the second workshop session include: "Going Home Again: The Culture of the Chicano Academic" and "The Burden of Success: Women in Graduate School." Papers provided for the third workshop session include: The Lessons of Relation" and "Educational Alternatives--Something Between Despair and Pollyanna." A seventh paper, "Democratic Education for American Society," provides an overview of the workshop objectives and results. (Author/DE)

Workshop/Conference

Democratic Education for American Society

The Wright Institute
2728 Durant Ave.
Berkeley, CA 94704

26 and 27 July 1974

415/841-9111, 841-9230

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Our hope is that this meeting can help to synthesize current thinking about education, to offer analysis of contemporary issues and to develop plans for change which are richer, clearer and more easily available to people at large.

To facilitate the exchange of information and viewpoints, papers are being prepared by people with extensive experience in the areas which are the foci of the sessions. These essays will be distributed in advance to participants so that the emphasis of the conference will be on small group discussions related to the general session topics. Opportunity has been provided for plenary sessions in which the full group can continue the dialogues started in the discussion sections.

Democratic education should also inculcate on every child the essential unity of a democratic community, in spite of endless diversities of function, capacity, and achievement among the individuals who compose the community.... It is a doctrine essential to diffused democratic contentment and self-respect, but materially different from the ordinary conception of equality of condition as a result of democracy; for unity is atainable, while equality of condition is unnatural and unattainable. The freedom and social mobility which characterize the democratic state permit, and indeed bring about, striking inequalities of condition; and if the surface of democratic society should be leveled off any day, inequalities would reappear on the morrow, unless individual freedom and social mobility should be destroyed. The children of a democratic society should, therefore, be taught at school, with the utmost explicitness, and with vivid illustrations, that inequalities of

condition are a necessary result of freedom; but that through all inequalities should flow the constant sense of essential unity in aim and spirit. This unity in freedom is the social goal of democracy, the supreme good of all ranks of society, of the highest no less than the lowest....

As an outcome of successful democratic education, certain habits of thought should be well established in the minds of all the children before any of them are obliged to leave school in order to help in the support of the family. In some small field each child should acquire a capacity for exact observation, and as a natural result of this acquirement it should come to admire and respect exact observation in all fields.... Yet democratic institutions will not be safe until a great majority of the population can be trusted not only to observe accurately and state precisely the results of observation, but also to draw just inferences from those results. The masses of the people will always be liable to dangerous delusions so long as their schools fail to teach the difference between a true cause and an event preceding or accompanying a supposed effect...

Any one who has attained to the capacity for exact observation and exact description, and knows what it is to draw a correct inference from well-determined premises, will naturally acquire a respect for these powers when exhibited by others in fields unknown to him. Moreover, any one who has learned how hard it is to determine a fact, to state it accurately, and to draw from it the justly limited inference, will be sure that he himself cannot do these things, except in a very limited field. He will know that his own personal activity must be limited to a few subjects, if his capacity is to be really excellent in any.... Having, as the result of his education, some vision of the great range of knowledge and capacity needed in the business of the world, he will respect the trained capacities which he sees developed in great diversity in other people. In short, he will come to respect and confide in the expert in every field of human activity. Confidence in experts, and willingness to employ them and abide by their decisions, are among the best signs of intelligence in an educated individual or an educated community; and in any democracy which is to thrive, this respect and confidence must be felt strongly by the majority of the population....

> Democracies will not be safe until the population has learned that governmental affairs must be conducted on the same principles on which successful private and corporate business is conducted; and therefore it should be one of the principal objects of democratic education so to train the minds of the children, that when they become adult they shall have within their own experience the grounds of respect for the attainments of experts in every branch of governmental, industrial, and social activity, and of confidence in their advice.

From Charles William Eliot, "The Function of Education in a Democratic Society," 1898.

Friday, 26 July 1:40-5:15 p.m.

Session I: The Price of Failure: Equality of Educational Opportunity and the Realities of Competition

It is now almost universally acknowledged that existing educational institutions are not functioning satisfactorily. Race, class and sex bias in their structure and operation help to explain some of these difficulties. The puzzling issue is, however, why so little of the data supporting this analysis has had impact on educational policy-making. Perhaps we must decide if the inequality in schools is due to more complex causes than simple bigotry. We must determine whether the difficulties relate to the narrow range of skills schools teach and the limited character of the personality traits they emphasize. Could we reconceptualize the role of schooling so that some of these problems could be avoided?

Papers for this session are:

"Institutional Racism: Barrier to Educational Change," by Dr. Harold Dent.

Harold Dent is a clinical and counseling psychologist who has specialized in the fields of community psychology and the development of the role of the psychologist in community action, delivery of health care to Third World and poor communities, psychological testing in schools and mental retardation. He has worked, taught, published and served as a consultant in these fields. He is a former member of the faculty of the Wright Institute Graduate School and former Coordinator of Pupil Personnel Services for the Berkeley Public Schools. Currently, he works as Director of

Consultation and Educational Services at the Westside Community Mental Health Center in San Francisco.

"Reversing School Failure: Why It Doesn't Happen; Limited Exceptions Where It Does," by Marcia Perlstein.

Marcia Perlstein is a Marriage, Child and Family Counselor in private practice in Berkeley. She has been an Associate of the National Commission on Resources for Youth and an originator and coordinator of two alternative public high schools, Opportunity I and II, in San Francisco. She has just edited a book of articles on education, Flowers Can Even Bloom in Schools.

> Laissez-faire education runs the same risks as laissez-faire economics. Power and privilege accumulate like an avalanche. There must be safeguards, regulations, guarantees of opportunities, and these themselves perpetuate the system. Compulsory education was invented to help equalize opportunity, to even the score, to prevent exploitation. To some extent it has done so, but at the same time it has created deadening standardization, artificiality, and, as Illich often points out, a new system of hierarchy and privilege as oppressive as the one it was meant to displace.

From Judson Jerome, "After Illich, What?"

Saturday, 27 July 9:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Session II: The Burden of Success: The Recruitment and Training of National Elites

Graduate School is a rite of passage through which one goes to become a professional. While public attention has generally been addressed to the achievements of the institutions and individuals involved in this process, we know remarkably little about the impact of this experience on those students, on the people who come into contact with them and on their subsequent careers. Although dissatisfaction with such training is well known, students are made to feel that their problems are personal ones, related to peculiar difficulties they have as individuals. Institutional expectations are that people, regardless of their backgrounds,

should conform to the constraints of professional roles. Of course, identification as a woman or as a member of a minority group only exacerbates this general problem. Is it possible to devise a new type of apprenticeship for the professions that doesn't force people to sacrifice important parts of their personalities for the sake of their professional futures? Do we believe that graduate training could integrate the psychological needs of students with their cognitive development? Is there some alternative to the contemporary plight of intellectuals and other professional groups who are alienated from and fragmented by their work?

Papers for this session are:

"Going Home Again: The Culture of the Chicano Academic," by Richard Rodriguez.

Richard Rodriguez will teach in the department of English at the University of California, Berkeley next year.

"The Burden of Success: Women in Graduate School," by Anne Robinson Taylor.

Anne Robinson Taylor is a Research Associate at the Wright Institute and a doctoral condidate in the department of English at the University of California, Berkeley.

Saturday, 27 July 2:00-5:00p.m.

Session III: The Possibility of Alternatives: Educational Politics and Social Goals

Is it possible for us to combat the prevailing cynicism that characterizes much of the contemporary educational discourse? How can experts operate in a society committed to democratic pluralism? What kinds of experts do we need and how might they be selected and trained? How can their skills be maximized for the benefit of the society that subsidizes their trianing?

Educational institutions have other functions besides those of training elites. What are the skills needed by the general population? Can schools successfully inculcate them? Do we believe that a more open society is possible? And how does education relate to the development of a future in which there would be a reorientation of values which stressed new social goals and personal priorities? Must we devise new types of educatonal institutions during this period of transition to a different society? What would real social change look like, and how do we mobilize to get it?

Papers for this session are:

"The Lessons of Relation," by Peter Marin.

Peter Marin has been the Director of Pacific High School, a radical free school in Palo Alto; a Chief Evaluator of the HEW Model Day-Care Center in Washington; Dean of Blake College, an experimental college in Mexico and a Fellow of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. He is presently writing fiction.

"Educational Alternatives--Something Between Despair and Pollyanna," By Arthur Pearl.

Arthur Pearl has taught in the areas of education, psychology and public affairs. His most recent books are The Atrocity of Education and Landslide: The How and Why of Nixon's Victory. He has worked with several public agencies in the areas of drug and alcohol abuse, and also in youth and community affairs.

Strange, is it not, how we now have whole libraries of heavy research in the humanities and social sciences--including the work of our humanist scholars--that add up to less wisdom, less living insight than many of our youth can find in the

words of illiterate primitives like Black Elk or Carlos Casteneda's Don Juan, and surely less than any of us would find in a single dialogue of Plato, a single essay of Montaigne, a single Buddhist sutra?

Can one help concluding that there is something more radically corrupted than humanist intellectuals suspect about a standard of intellect which requires a lifetime of professional study and strenuous debate, much ornate methodology and close research to produce at last a meager grain of human understanding, cautiously phrased and nearly drowning in its own supporting evidence? That people are very likely not machines... that love is rather important to healthy growth... that 'peak experiences' are probably of some personal and cultural significance... that living things have 'goal-oriented needs'... that human beings have an emotional inside and are apt to resent being treated like statistical ciphers or mere objects... that participating in things is more rewarding than passively watching or being bossed about... how many books do I take up each year and abandon in anguished boredom after the first two chapters, because here once again is some poor soul offering me a ton of data and argument to demonstrate what ought to be the axioms of daily human experience? If our paleolithic ancestors were presented with these 'controversial new findings,' surely far from applauding our deep-minded humanism, they would only wonder 'where along the line did these people become so stupid that they now must prove to themselves from scratch that 2 + 2 = 4?'

The source for the quote on pp. vii-viii of the introductory material is Theodore Roszak, Where the Wasteland Ends, pp. 415-416.

Institutional Racism: A Barrier to Educational Change

Harold E. Dent, Ph.D.

One of the aims of this conference is to examine some of the reasons why those programs which were designed to bring about equality in the educational institution in this country have failed so miserably to accomplish or even approximate that goal. This discussion will focus specifically on institutional racism and its role in completely thwarting all efforts to bring about the changes most of us believe to be necessary. My comments are based solely on my perceptions of the institutional racism I've encountered, or that I've observed to operate so effectively to resist changes.

I know many people will not accept my oversimplified definition of racism, nor will they understand my protrayal of the effects of racism. Most white Americans cannot understand racism because their experiences, their backgrounds and everything that influences their present existence will not permit them to see or understand it. They cannot see it because they reject as invalid any input they receive that is different from their reality or their world of experience. It is almost impossible for those who enjoy the benefits of racism to see the destruction that racism inflicts on others. Racism, specifically institutional racism, is a natural, accepted, integral part of the fibre of which this society and its institutions are made.

Let me try to point out exactly why it is so difficult for those who enjoy its benefits to recognize and understand the essence of racism. Grossly oversimplified, racism is an expression of an attitude or an act or a series of acts which subordinates a person or group because of race or color or ethnic background. In other words, racism is an act or acts which results in a put down of a person or group by a member or members of another racial group because of race. Institutional racism is a pattern of acts, a well-established set of organizational procedures, formal or informal, which are woven into the operational structure of the organization or institution which subordinates a person or group because of race. Interestingly, one does not have to consciously desire to function in a racist manner, but merely in the process of following established organizational policies will manifest racist behavior. (All future mention of the term racism in this discussion will refer to institutional racism.)

A clear example of institutional racism and how it pays off for white America is seen in the typical employment situation. This occurs in educational institutions as often as it occurs in other areas. In recent years there has been a conscious effort by government and industry to increase minority hiring. But employers have run into the problem of not finding enough minorities who meet the established job qualifications.

Racism enters the picture when one examines why minorities are not adequately prepared. They have been denied equal access to educational and training opportunities which would have prepared them to compete effectively. This represents a direct economic payoff for the white worker in this situation because untrained minorities present less competition for employment. Racism is such a natural and integral part of the fibre of this society that there are times when the victims are unaware they have been victimized. This should not be interpreted to mean that racism is a subtlety or a con. This is to emphasize the fact that racism is a natural, well established well accepted social phenomenon in these United States.

Institutional racism is also deeply ingrained in moral principles, ethical practices and in the traditions of every institution of this country. It is a completely self-perpetuating systmm programmed to resist change and reject all efforts to alter the predetermined payoffs for the dominant segment of soceity. The inherent nature of the racism is manifest in our educational institutions in such a way that it will not permit change designed to produce payoffs for minorities. Educational equality cannot be achieved until the entire system is reprogrammed to distribute the payoffs equitably among minorities as well as whites. By educational equality is meant equal access to educational opportunities, equality of conditions and facilities in which educational programs operate, and unbiased resources, e.g., texts books, curriculum, screening devices,

teachers, etc. As long as whites enjoy the advantages of greater job opportunities and greater economic security than minorities as a result of these differences in the quality of educational services, all of the conscious efforts at educational reform by even the most well meaning of us are doomed to failure. It is unrealistic to expect those who are presently enjoying these payoffs to willingly give up even a portion of them in order to bring about the better life for all.

A significant aspect of institutional racism is the necessity to maintain control over the factors that influence the payoffs. White dominated school boards, governmental agencies and communities are intensely threatened by efforts to wrest from them the control that could bring about change and produce payoffs for minorities. In an article in the Harvard Review (1971), Mrs. Annie Stein described the "strategies for failure" employed by those in control of the New York City schools who were obviously unwilling to relinquish that control to minority communities. In NYC a parent movement for integration began shortly after the historic Supreme Court decision of 1954. The parents recognized that their children, who were attending segregated Black and Puerto Rican schools, were not learning basic academic skills. Yet, students in the all white schools, in some instances as close as a mile away, were doing well academically. This stirred the parents to press for integration of the N.Y. public schools. The administration and the Board of Education of New York City schools, in an attempt to avoid

the potential (though unreal) threat that integration posed for white children, were willing to make promises to minority parents in the form of a massive program of new school construction. Minority parents demanded the new schools be placed in the fringe areas and that the zones for these new schools be established so as to yield a 50/50 distribution of minority and white students. Although these promises were made they were not fulfilled. What actually happened was that many of the new schools were constructed in areas where it was not possible to create racial balance. When new schools were placed in fringe areas the boundaries were gerrymandered to create new racially segregated schools. Mrs. Stein reported that before the massive school construction program began in 1955 fifty-two schools in New York City were segregated. In 1966 there were two hundred one segregated schools in New York City. Equally as devastating to minority children is the fact that in 1960 forty per cent of the Black and Puerto Rican students in New York attended segregated schools. In 1967 more than half of the Black and Puerto Rican students in New York attended segregated schools. In 1967 more than half of the Black and Puerto Rican students were in segregated schools.

Here in Berkeley, which prides itself as being an enlightened, progressive community, the effects of institutional racism can be seen very clearly when one examines the locations of the elementary schools and the ethnic distribution of the population of Berkeley. For those unfamiliar with the demography

of this city, the concentration of Blacks, Chicanos and people of low income is in the flatlands of West Berkeley, while the majority of whites live in the Berkeley hills. In 1969 when Berkeley "voluntarily" embarked on a program to desegrate the schools, it was agreed that all students in the district from Kindergarten through the sixth grade would be bused to school at some time in their young academic careers. But the plan that was finally adopted designated all schools in the Berkeley hills as K-3 schools. That plan also assigned the 4-6 grades to schools in the flatlands. This was consistent with the agreement that all K-6 students would be bused at some time in the first six grades of school. But what it really meant was that Black and Chicano children would ride the buses during their K-3 years and white children didn't have to board buses until they reached the fourth grade.

To some this may appear to be an equitable solution to a difficult problem. But it was a painful solution for the parents of Black and Chicano children. They recognized that they had to allow their children to ride the buses during the earliest years of school, if there was to be any semblence of integration in Berkeley. Advocates of neighborhood schools (then and now) insist that it is to the child's advantage to attend school as close to his home as possible. White parents in Berkeley insisted on this while ignoring the fact that if it were true for their children it was equally true for minority children. The public reasons offered to justify the decision to

place K-3 grades in the hill schools was that the hill schools were small (average capacity 300) and that it was advantageous to children to start their education in small settings.

The newly assigned 4-6 schools, all located in the flatlands, had average capacities of 900 plus. It must be kept in mind that all schools involved had previously been K-6 schools. If the inherent nature of institutional racism in this situation is not evident to the reader, I shall spell it out. If the neighborhood school concept and the philosophy that children benefit most by starting their educational experiences in small, intimat· settings are valid, then why were all the K-6 schools in the flatlands constructed with student capacities of 900 or more? It should be noted that the newest fo the flatland schools was the largest of all with a student capacity of over a thousand.

Racism exists at every level of the educational institutions in this country from the legislative and governmental levels to the district and community levels and into the classroom. To begin with legislature provides funding for governmentally designed programs that have victimized and stigmatized minority students for years. Often on the advice of governmental experts and other professionals, the legislature endorses and sometimes requires the application of racially-biased selection procedures as a way for school districts to acquire additional money to finance schools. Until 1973 the state of California provided additional funds to local school districts for identifying the

so called educably mentally-retarded (EMR) students (EMR) students and segregating them in special classes. In principle this is an admirable thing to do because it is based on the assumption that these students will receive special attention and special instruction which will enable them to function at (assumed) optimum capacity. But it became clear to many experts in the field of special education some years ago that special classes did not necessarily serve the special needs of the students (See a recent review by Ferrald, 1973). Special education classes were and are special only because they remove from the regular classes the most disruptive students who are the least responsive (regardless of ability) to the standard academic approaches used in the regular classroom. Examination of the EMR population in the state of California (and throughout the nation) reveals that the students most likely to be placed in these classes are invariably active, aggressive male students, Black and Chicano.

It has been widely publicized that at least seventy-five per cent of the Black and Chicano children in classes for the educably mentally retarded in the state of California are inappropriately placed in these classes (Mercer, 1973). This is a direct result of the requirement that prospective candidates for these classes be administered a standard individual IQ test. Although eminent psychologists have stated and evidence clearly indicates that IQ tests (and standard tests of achievement) are culturally biased and systemically underestimate the abilities

of Black and Chicano students (Albee, 1969; Green, 1972), they are still being required and used on minority children. Exactly why and how IQ and achievement tests are culturally biased is seldom, if ever, reported in psychology books or in the widely read professional journals. Occasionally this information might appear in one of the more esoteric psychological journals or monographs, the ones few psychologists read. You will seldom see in print how the selection of the items that comprise these tests are biased in content and/or due to the sampling procedures used to determine which items are retained and which ones are discarded. If you examine the content of items on an IQ test you will never find items that tap the experiences of people who are culturally different from the white middle class model. I was first struck by this appalling situation when I was administering IQ tests to children in Hawaii who had not had the opportunity to leave the islands. One of the items on the Wechsler IQ test for children is, "What is the thing to do if you see a train approaching a broken track?" THERE ARE NO TRAINS IN HAWAII!!! Should a child be penalized for not providing a scoreable response to a question that poses a situation he has had no opportunity to experience? Is it fair to ask a ghetto child, how would he find his way out of a forest? Is it surprising that an Indian child from a reservation would not give the appropriate answer to the question, "Why is it better to pay bills by check than by cash?" Or worse yet, "Who discovered America?" These are but a few examples of why IQ tests are

culturally-biased and why they systematically underestimate the abilities of minority children. The result of the use of culturally-biased IQ tests is that a disproportionately large number of Black and Chicano children are inappropriately placed in special education classes for the educably mentally-retarded. For example, in 1970 the Black student population in the state of California made up 9 per cent of the total student population, yet Blacks comprised 27 per cent of the population of the EMR classes.

The California State Legislature and the California State Department of Public Instruction allow this blatant racist practice to continually victimize thousands of minority children in spite of the fact that a Federal Judge, Robert Peckham, has rendered a decision that this practice clearly violates the civil rights of the children so placed (Larry P. vs Riles 1972). Likewise a similar requirement that a child being considered for placement in the state programs for the educably gifted be subjected to a standard individual IQ test denies thousands of gifted minority students the opportunity to benefit from these programs. Again, it is the systematic bias of the tests which underestimates the abilities of Black and Chicano students, thus denying them admission to these programs. Black and Chicano students combined make up 25 per cent of the student population throughout California, yet together they comprise less than 3 per cent of the students in the state-supported programs for the mentally gifted.

One cannot ignore the importance of economics in any discussion of racism, for in many instances it is the economic incentive that motivates change or the resistance to change. In the case of standard IQ tests and standard tests of academic achievement, there is no monetary incentive for test makers to develop appropriate measures when they can continue to reap substantial financial rewards from continued sales of their instruments. Test makers have been successful by blaming the victimization of minority children on the misuses of the tests rather than investing the necessary funds in the development of instruments that accurately assess the skills and abilities of minority students. So long as the California State Legislature and the State Department of Public Instruction and local districts maintain their requirements that existing standard tests be administered as a means of assessing the academic progress and intellectual abilities of minority as well as white students, test makers will continue to produce the same biased instruments without concern for the destructive effects they have on minority children.

Th racism that prevents effective educational reform is not limited to the public educational arena. The colleges and universities contribute substantially to the problem as well, for it is there that teachers and public school administrators, psychologists, etc. get their training. Little, if anything is being done at the college and university level to adequately prepare professionals for the job of teaching or relating to minority children. In some teacher training programs lip-

service is being paid to this task, but without real recognition of the seriousness of the task or the significance of the role teachers play in the lives of the students they effect. Universities and colleges take no responsibility for insuring the competencies of the people they train and likewise public school teachers refuse to be held accountable for the progress or lack of progress of their students. In spite of the cries of protest and the years of mounting criticism about the conflict between the white middle-class values of teachers and the values of the students whose backgrounds are different from that of the teacher, training programs do little to prepare teachers to overcome this basic problem. If anything they tend to exacerbate the problem rather than reduce it. All too often a minority student entering college or university finds it necessary to acquire the values of his mentors in order to successfully maneuver his way through the system. When he enters a classroom he perceives and reacts to minority children in much the same way as others who are steeped in the values of the dominant cultural group.

Little is being done to counterbalance the cultural myths or develop attitudes which respect the differences between cultural groups. The myth of the deficit model and the myths associated with such labels as "culturally deprived" and "culturally disadvantaged" provide comfortable cop-outs for teachers who have failed to teach minority students. It is an

acceptable justification for avoiding responsibility and accountability. Student failure must be recognized as teacher-failure, school-failure, and system-failure.

The faculties of the major institutions of higher education with which I am familiar want to stay sheltered in the campuses while they try to encourage students to get out into communities where the action is. College students, like elementary school students, need role models. They (college students) need to learn there is more o relating to minority communities than gathering data for a research project that will result in a publication and points toward promotion for a faculty member. They need to learn that professionals can relate to minority communities by listening, to hear from that community what their problems and priorities are; not by telling the community what it should do, what its problems and needs might be. They need to learn that (minority) parents have a right to be involved in the educational process and programs just as white parents. It does not matter whether they speak English fluently or are not available for conferences at the convenience of the teacher. It is of course difficult for white faculties who themselves know little of the Black or Chicano or Asian experience to train others to see how these different cultural experiences influence the lives and functioning of people.

Academia has been even more effective than industry in using the cop-out that qualified minorities are not available. But the reason for this situation, if it exists, should be obvious. However, when experienced, qualified minorities are

available they are seldom hired at a level comparable to whites with the same qualifications. In rare but highly publicized instances minorities are brought in to be high visibility niggers, but are not given authority and power comparable to the position. More often than not minorities are brought into universities on soft money and when the grant terminates so does the minority faculty.

Unfortunately colleges and universities are themselves monuments which have built into their structure the same institutional racism as any other institution. The hiring, promotion, admission and scholarship policies are clear examples of this appalling situation.

These comments and observations provide only superficial survey of the most obvious impediments that institutional racism imposes on efforts to bring about educational change. This discussion was not intended to be a pessimist's perception of futility. On the contrary it was intended to point out the necessity to focus future efforts on the basic issue of racism in all its ramifications (a few of which were identified in this discussion). It is the firm conviction of this writer that educators stop focusing on the student as a source of failure and focus on the educational and social systems and the payoffs reaped by those in control of these institutions.

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REVERSING SCHOOL FAILURE:
WHY IT DOESN"T HAPPEN
LIMITED EXCEPTIONS WHERE IT DOES

Marcia Perlstein

In order to approach this topic I need to define myself. I am 29 going on 64, a conservative in the new schools movement. I am not unique in believing that most schools as they are currently structured do violence to the human spirit and don't even any longer accomplish what they purport to. I agree with the many people who feel that options must be made available to students which restructure power relationships, give students a part in deciding what they learn and how they best learn. However, I don't support over-reactions which immediately assume that anything which is diametrically opposed to the traditional is automatically OK. I have little patience with adults who cop out completely behind the empty rhetoric of progressivism.

Most of my major work in education has been in the public schools since that's where the kids are. I support a voucher system with safeguards against racism and sexism where parents and kids could avoid schools where kids felt like failures and could instead participate in programs where their dignity was genuinely recognized. However, progress is so slow in making these alternatives available to the majority of students that my own work must remain in the public schools. I am under no illusions about the rate of progress there but I feel greater urgency about trying to make some impact for the captive audiences who remain victims of a treacherous system. I am moved by visions of deschooling society but am aware that

those are merely at the dream stage. I cannot indulge in the luxury of dreaming as an excuse for inaction. I try to remain involved in finding some small corner of the world where important things can happen in the present while stretching and reaching for something far different in the future. The fact remains that kids are still going to schools; somebody has to be there on Monday morning doing things differently enough that schools don't remain totally in the control of those who would continue to make kids feel like failures. Someone on the inside has to wage vocal and meaningful protest constantly publicizing atrocities when they occur and developing and acting upon alternatives. Simultaneously, others can work outside the system with kids and parents who are willing to do that.

I may not be in this place forever - in fact, I may drop out ten minutes from now. However, as long as I can hang in, can connect with the growing network of others who feel the way I do, things today can possibly be a little different for the students whom we touch and for those of us who allow ourselves to be touched by our students. I am alternately bitter and optimistic. The optimism keeps me going and the bitterness keeps the reason uppermost in my mind. My nine years in developing new school programs have occupied the better part of my energy. The work I have done has helped reverse my own personal failure syndrome. The many important moments, the dramatic differences in a few kids' lives, the

sparks of interest from other teachers and administrators similarly engaged have all kept me going. When I look at the total picture I still get pretty sick and I do that often enough to keep myself honest. However, in my professional, as in my personal life, I've recently learned that the only way I can make a small contract with sanity is through allowing pleasurable moments to happen and even take over. During the times the good moments exist I never lose sight of the fact that there is much more work to be done and that beyond the small corners and short moments where things feel OK much still is not as it ought to be. Hopefully, the many kids who are experiencing many good moments will feel similarly and help to continue the process and make it available to others. Now more specifically to failure.

These remarks will touch on many aspects of the problem. Space doesn't permit depth analysis of any single issue. My intention is to make a few observations which may serve as springborads for a discussion which will take any direction you choose.

The paradox of knowing the cost of failure and yet allowing it to continue is akin to the paradox of bad therapy--having deep insights into your own motivations, being able to articulately delineate them, yet continuing to remain the same--wracked with pain. We all know about how widespread school failure is; we know a good deal about the costs to the individual and to the society; yet, the large majority of

students who go through the school system feel like failures every day of their lives. I'd like to address myself to these conditions, why they exist and to some limited but real alternatives which attempt to address this issue.

THE DISEMBODIED INTELLECT AND OTHER FAILURE PATTERNS

First I think it is crucial to underscore the fact that by the standards of this culture's school system almost everyone is a failure. Success is so limited, so narrowly defined and so ephemeral that even those who know how to play the game do so at such a cost that they don't come out feeling very good about themselves. "And Richard Cory one fine summer night/ went home and put a bullet through his head." This will be dealt with in much greater depth during the second section of this workshop but I can't resist a word about the disembodied intellect phenomena and the notion of never enough. My own experiences have informed my notions about this type of failure feeling.

I went to a very competitive and well known high school. I was loved in direct proportion to my achievements and soon learned that the way to get anything I wanted was to produce. Relative to the general population I was success. In my own eyes I was a constant failure because of the little bit more I wasn't doing. It all came to a head when I got a 99 on a statewide science test and my mother jokingly but very revealingly asked "what happened to the other point?" 99 wasn't good

enough in our private little exchange, although as a conversation gambit at the mah jongg game it gave my mother lots of milage. That's still happening. The major difference for me now is that my mother's responses to my achievements are no longer what my concept of myself rests upon. But that took a long time to straighten out. That took endless energy drain in rebelling, dropping out, not achieving at all, and then very slowly and very painfully picking up and starting to create a life for myself where I could feel productive, yet whole; a life in which I neither over-valuated myself because of my achievements nor knocked myself for feeling good about gaining a little recognition from people I respected. It took a long time to learn that I was OK whether or not I did prococious things, that meaningful contact with other human beings, a sense of serenity and peace where more important than all the achievements in the world but that some form of productive activity in which I believed could be integrated in my changed personal and world view. This could only be true if these activities didn't disturb the balance I'd begun to develop. This struggle was and is very real and very central to me. I am grateful that I'm beginning to see the other side, that I'm beginning to feel less and less like a disembodied intellect and more like a whole person. I'd rather have struggled than continued suffering but if I really had my druthers I'd rather not have suffered at all. I get angry that all this happened to me, I get angrier that it has

happened and is happening to so many others and that there are so few exceptions. And what makes me angriest of all is that such an infintesimal proportion of our population have the financial and other resources to redress these difficulties, to reverse years of failure, to learn genuinely to love and accept themselves and therefore others. My situation is not at all unique; it is one cut in the failure pattern.

There are about five central ones. Mine fits into the category I mentioned before 1) the disembodied intellect variety--the head spiritually removed from the rest of the being and seen only in terms of achievements and more specifically in terms of the limitations of those achievements. 2) Then there is the stump on a log variety; the person who feels so unable to produce in the narrowly defined terms of the school system that he or she becomes entirely immobilized in pools of fear, lack of self-acceptance and resignation. 3) The subtle variation on this is the stump on the log in the middle of the road variety; the person who feels all that his/her counterpart in the preceding description feels but instead of resignation engages in unconscious subtle sabotage, tries in some way to slow the system down. This person is unaware of actions being directed by a sense of failure because most of his/her actions are inactions. 4) The next variety of failure is open and active aggression. Kids in this category are tired of feeling badly about themselves so they figure out ways to express their frustrations. Their methods range

from openly political protest to what the professionals call "delinquent acting out behavior". There are important differences in the methods of expression chosen although observers might not make these distinctions. Conservative psychologists tend to oversimplify and see even the most conscientious political protest as a rebellious acting out authority problems. While others have delved a little deeper and begun to see some kinds of protestors in terms of high levels of moral development and genuine concern for others. 5) The last and most pernicious variety of failure expression is the inwardly destructive one. These acts range from mild forms of self-denigration all the way to extreme cases of academic suicides. The latter occur mostly among so called "achievers"--two among the graduating class of the special high school I attended. The incidence of suicide among college students is far greater than that among their counterparts in the general population. They feel like failures in the milieu they felt unable to escape from.

The scripts of the last four are so familiar to all of us that they do not have to be spelled out in detail, certainly not in abstract, general terms. However, it is crucial that as educators we continue to hear students feelings of frustration and failure and to alter dramatically programs in a direction which eliminates these dimensions. Students need to understand that although their feelings are shared by many many others that their own versions are very personal, very real and need to be expressed before they can be altered.

Anyone working with students on their feelings of failure needs to cope with the delicate balance between helping them see themselves as part of a huge network trying to alter and resist the entire competitive framework and as, at the same time, special and unique. It is crucial to listen to peoples' stories but it is even more crucial to move beyond those into reshaping long-term failure syndromes into something very different, something deeper, more pervasive and more real than even success (which still uses failure as a reference point and is still a very narrowly defined concept).

BEYOND FAILURE - COMPETENCE RATHER THAN SUCCESS

One of the ways not to feel like a failure is to develop skills which increase rather than narrow options. These include basic skills and process skills (learning how to learn) and learning not for a particular field but for new ones which may be created in the future--which we all may help to create. The way skills are learned is important as the skills themselves; however, too many alternative programs have thrown out the baby with the bathwater by entirely dismissing skill development as a goal. They have replaced competence with rhetoric, reading with navel contemplation, writing with relating. For example, most of my work has been in urban areas with high school kids. Reversing years of failure and teaching them to read is a difficult undertaking. The radical

rhetoric of the alternative schools movement gives me lots of skirts to hide behind to rationalize away my responsibility in this area. The kids themselves give me added fuel if I choose to pick it up. Reversing years of failure and teaching them to read is much more difficult than relating to them. However, the two do not have to be mutually exclusive and my merely relating to my kids without helping them gain competencies would be an empty and irresponsible act. I work hard to break through self-denigration, help them acquire basic skills and then offer them the option of rejecting the whole thing and never using the skills they have acquired. My skills are available to me, in like manner, whether I choose to use them or not. It would be patronizing and racist of me to offer my kids anything less. I feel the strong need to offer them both, to offer skills in a non-coercive, non-competitive, relaxed atmosphere, but, nevertheless to offer them.

IF WE KNOW SO MUCH - WHY STILL SO MUCH FAILURE?

Contemporary educational muckrakers have done far more complete analysises than I will attempt at this time. I resonate to some, though not all, of Jerry Farber's "The Student and Society: An Annotated Manifesto". He talks about failure in economic terms. He talks about ways in which the majority of people are shut out so that the few can retain

elitist social and financial postions. Schools are designed to perpetuate these inequities. He talks about ways in which schools train rather than educate and how various disciplines retain vocabularies and traditions which shut most people out. This is a complex notion.

I would not totally eliminate the training function of schools but I'd make access into the professions much more fluid and open. The new careers concept offers the best possibilities in this direction. People bring their skills, plug in at some level and simultaneously attend school to get "credentialed". They stop at whatever school level they choose but still remain active in the field, actually using the combination of their own skills and those they have picked up in "training programs". Most of the training is a modified version, it relies less on busy work and more on practical considerations. Thus, new careerists gear their learning towards the task itself--helping the people and using their professional and personal skills as a vehicle for doing so. Although I have some basic questions about what it means to be credentialed in most fields I think it is crucial while revisions are being made from within for access to be made available to a wider variety of people with personal skills which add important dimensions. The academic skills we are all forced to achieve must be radically questioned and revised--many are not applicable to the task. The presence of new careerists in a variety of programs has stimulated this

process. Thus, one way of trying to change our narrow notions of what constitutes success is through opening access into a variety of fields to many people, helping them achieve skills necessary for productive activity and seriously sifting and revising our notions of what ought to remain and what archaic, elitist remnants serve little function beyond shutting people out who ought not be eliminated. Opening access is not a patronizing choice for elitists--it involves recognition of the rights of all people to the positions they choose for themselves. The mysticism must begin to be dispelled.

Jerry Farber deals with many of these concepts in "The Student as Nigger". Here again, although I agree with much of what he says I think he slightly overstates the case. But this is helpful to me in moving beyond the status quo to some middle ground. He dramatically talks about the price that those few students who appear to succeed must pay and how those who refuse to pay the price are generally economically and psychologically shut out of a mainstream that some elect to opt out of but that most feel they can't make it into. This level of political analysis is crucial. I am also concerned with two other facets: the social order created within schools which does something more devestating than merely mirroring society and finally, the possibilities for altering and reversing some of the most insidious, competitive patterns which are still common fare in most schools.

THE SCHOOL SOCIETY

One of the most noticable things about most schools is that what seems to be of primary importance is the convenience and comfort of adults. That seems to be of even greater concern than the training function. And down at the very bottom of the list is the education of students. Most administrators and teachers will go to almost any lengths to preserve their power and to create the most comfortable conditions for themselves. That doesn't sound like such a terrible thing on the surface but horror stories begin emerging when one realizes that for the most part the convenience of adults is at the expense of kids. If the function of education were primarily considered, if kids were truly viewed as consumers of a service with the concomitant rights (as Riesman and Pearl point out in New Careers for the Poor) then the convenience of everyone in the school community would be mutually considered. Teachers and kids would be natural allies in moving towards their goal. This is happening in a few exceptional situations. In the more exceptional ones the community is intimately related to the process. More often than not, however, the distressing reality is that adults give lip service to the goal of educating youngsters but actually structure schools to take care of themselves.

Teachers' unions are a good case in point. The claim is that if teachers' working conditions are optimal that they

will do a better job at educating kids. However, we never seem to reach that point. I believe, on one hand, that teachers need to be protected and working conditions improved, that is why I belong to a union. However, in practice, this has not meant an alliance with students. As far as I can see, students have not benefitted from the gains teachers have made. In some cases, the contrary is often true. For example, several years ago in San Francisco it was the teachers' union which objected to the use of streetworkers to help with students' drug problems. The teachers were "professionally" threatened. If they cared at all about kids they'd embrace any and all human resources who could help them do the job--they wouldn't feel that they needed to have a corner on the education market. In like manner, para-professionals would be welcomed instead of tolerated, students would be encouraged to help each other and it wouldn't be called cheating. The union problem is very complex. Teachers who are trying any kind of restructuring need the protection of unions but for this they pay a very gib price. The best solution for me at present is to fight the union from within; to try to prevent some of the inequities perpetrated in the name of professionalism.

The points about unions are only one example of ways in which adults' conveniences often run counter to kids' educational needs. Any structural or operational aspect of the schools can be similarly viewed. The failure that most kids are accustomed to experienceing can be explained by this

seemingly simple concept alone (although other ideas certainly add to the total failure picture including upwardly mobile parents who push a narrow training function and consider any kind of process considerations as frills). I'd like to pursue the point of adult convenience, however. If kids' needs aren't being considered, if the school society is structured for adults, then kids' feelings of failure become inconsequential; they are held personally responsible; they are all, somehow flawed (in the eyes of adults who are structuring the situations). I don't believe that most adults are consciously and deliberately malicious (they are just out for themselves; a concept supported by the society at large). I think most adults would not be opposed to allowing kids to feel good about themselves if it didn't alter adults' power positions. But, in point of fact, for kids to feel competent and autonomous does threaten adults and that's when they more ardently than ever defend the status quo driving "upstart" students out of the system.

I'd like to close this section with one more example of a structure which persists despite a good deal of data about its pernicious effects. Here again the principle of adult convenience institutionalizing student failure is illustrated. The tracking system is the case in point. The student failures fall into line whatever track they find themselves in (as discussed earlier in this piece). The system continues to exist because adults continue to support it. It is attractive

to most adults because it is predictable. A teacher can find his place and operate with some degree of certainty and comfort. Some may like the upper track classes because they get to hang out with kids like themselves; they talk the same language, have similar goals. The teacher can benignly bring them into the fold as long as they are willing to meekly pay the price. Other teachers use the same comfort and predictability to cloister themselves off with the middle track. Their parents aren't quite as bothersome about college entrance, the kids aren't as challenging in terms of ideas and the work is slightly more mechanical. Still other personalities fare best with the lower track. In that milieu they can feel really smart and powerful. They can talk a bit above the students' heads, give out lots of low grades and feel really powerful. In the faculty lounge they can grade quizzes, shake their heads in mock pity and scorn about how little the students know. Thus, every adult finds his/her place.

The society of the school is a failure infected mirror of the larger society. The larger society not only protects imbalances but it fosters them. For it is in response to the pressures and demands of the culture that the schools operate. However, the schools have gone the culture one better in responding uniquely to the pressures and forming their own special closed versions of the larger system with its own rewards and punishments. On a pure power level adults have everything to lose by taking the risks involved in helping

students feel autonomous and successful. They risk uncertainty instead of predictability, the censure, instead of the esteem of their colleagues, the pressure instead of the protection of their bosses, and, most importantly, personal exposure instead of hierarchal insularity. However, it is being done. And although Jencks and his crew have thoroughly demonstrated that the impact is not felt in any major way, for the people involved in taking risks and creating alternations, along with the war scars, some dramatically meaningful experiences have been observed. The people who help create these alternatives are the countless administrators who don't see themselves apart from students, who don't feel successes in inverse proportion to the degree in which students feel like failures. Many of these adults are frustrated and powerless themselves because they are locked into a system bent on perpetuating failure. Most get burned out after awhile of trying to restructure but have put in many good and important years. Reversing failure patterns is tough but possible work. It is grounded in the fundamental philosophy that one can dip down into his own well of failure experiences and resolve never to be a party to repeating these processes with one's own students. The details then can vary but any program can begin by changing power relationships in a single classroom, by genuinely hearing students, by standing beside them and growing along with them. That way their chances of experiencing failure are

minimized and one's own scars can begin belonging to an increasingly remote past.

PROGRAMS WHICH REVERSE FAILURE PATTERNS

The programs where kids and adults feel pretty good about themselves, are productively involved, and where energy is generally high are many. They often don't last, they are plagued by external pressures and internal fissures but we're learning. There are so many varieties, many ways for the failure syndromes mentioned earlier to be reversed.

Many projects which restructure relationships in the ways described above don't last beyond several years but are extremely meaningful for the duration of their existence. The ones I have noticed which tend to have some staying power usually do so for the wrong reasons. They either serve a purpose as tokens (enable some administrators and board members to buy off vocal parents and teachers by showing they are "with it") or those projects which have managed to achieve national recognition are kept around (so local powers have to pretend to embrace the very programs they tried to deter initially and also every step of the way). A very limited number are kept around because they genuinely help kids and a handful of superintendents and boards are not too threatened by this notion; in fact they openly encourage it. These people don't last long; thus, the phenomenon of musical chairs among the few really good superintendents.

Whatever the category--short term or institutionalized options, failure patterns tend to be reversed when kids make real choices, work with each other, develop interdependent relationships with adults, feel involved in activities which are productive in their eyes as well as others they respect, make use of human and other resources beyond the school site, place a heavy emphasis on process and involve genuine commitment to change. (See McClosky's article in Flowers Can Even Bloom in Schools, edited by Perlstein).

Thus, in Rabun Gap, Georgia, Eliot Wiggington, an English teacher, helped his kids start a small magazine which enabled them to preserve their Appalachian culture. The high school students formed significant relationships with each other, Eliot and with elderly people through involvement in this project. They learned folk wisdom, to share findings through writing and photography (and in doing so learned a variety of basic and broader skills) and recently learned to teach kids from other cultures how to begin similar projects (including a group on an Indian reservation). This small classroom exercise has now mushroomed into a museum created and run by the kids and the publication of two books. Many more of these types of programs exist around the country. The National Commission on Resources for Youth ferets them out and offers school workshops which describe the range of programs available by bringing the kids and teachers in to demonstrate their programs to people interested in starting similar ones. Follow-up workshops are then offered which provide technical

assistance on the details of these programs. (See Kohler's article in Flowers Can Even Bloom in Schools). NCRY also published a newsletter and a variety of materials offering further information on programs such as the one in Rabun Gap.

Entire schools and schools within schools have been created where kids are hiring their own teachers, conducting school business through town meetings and designing curriculum. Not all these programs are ideal, but many have taken important steps in helping kids reverse failure patterns. The International Consortium on Public Options in Education has begun offering workshops and pulling together materials on these programs. At their first international meeting in Minneapolis last fall a range of people came together to discuss the intricacies of these efforts. Many school districts have begun appointing personnel charged with the task of developing these programs. In most instances the efforts are token attempts which fit my earlier description; in some cases the efforts are real and the adults and kids involved are experiencing genuine changes in their lives.

More examples abound and in many programs, on every dimension--both the traditionally test oriented and the subjectively impressionistic, kids involved don't feel like failures. Again, I'm under no illusions that the system as a whole is at all ready for these programs but they do tell us something--things don't have to remain the way they are. On Monday morning, in many places called schools failure has been replaced by autonomy

and competence, a closed system has burst wide open and all sorts of positive possibilities have emerged.

Rodriquez

Going Home Again:
The Culture of the Chicano Academic

At each step, with every graduation from one level of education to the next, the refrain from bystanders was strangely always the same: "Your parents must be so proud of you." I suppose that my parents were proud, although I suspect too that they felt more than mere pride as they watched me advance through education. They seemed to know that my education was moving us apart from one another, making it difficult for us to resume familiar intimacies. Mixed with the instincts of parental pride, there seemed, as a result, always a certain hurt communicated, one too private to ever be adequately expressed in words, but one certain and real nonetheless.

My biographical facts pertinent here are simply stated by two sentences that exist awkwardly placed next to one another. First, I am the son of Mexican-American parents of slight schooling, parents who speak a blend of Spanish and English but who read neither language easily. More recently: (1974), I am about to receive a Ph.D. in English Renaissance literature. What sort of life connects these two statements? I look back and remember my life after I was seven or eight years old as one of constant movement away from a folk-culture (where, enclosed by the rich sounds of lower-class Spanish and the looming presence of relatives, I sensed the "gringo" world outside barely at all, except as an alien way of life) and toward the world of the classroom (with its English sounds and lines of printed words which pushed back into my mind's corners memories of older attachments). Year after year, I felt myself

becoming less like my parents and increasingly uncomfortable with the assumption of visiting relatives that I was still the Spanish-speaking child that they remembered. By the time I entered college, visits home became the occasion for silent embarrassment: there was so little to share, however strong the ties of our affection. My parents would tell me what happened in their lives or in the lives of relations; I would respond with news of my own. Then there followed only polite questions. We would try, though finally we would fail, to make the "conversations" seem more than interviews.

A few months ago, my dissertation nearly complete, I came upon my father as he looked through my bookcase, quietly fingering the volume of Milton's essays and Augustine's theology with that combination of reverence and distrust those who are not literate sometimes express for the written word. (I stood at the door of the room without making a noise and watched him.) However much he would have insisted that he was "proud" of his son for being able to master such texts, I knew, if pressed further, he would have admitted to an inexact regret at my success. (When he looked across the room and suddenly saw me, his body tightened slightly with surprise before we both smiled.)

I have made such admissions only lately in my life. Much longer, I kept to myself my uneasiness about becoming a success in education both because I wanted to leave vague feelings which, if considered carefully, I would have no way of dealing

with and because I felt that no one else shared my reaction to the "opportunity" of education. I also guessed that my history, especially its racial particularities--the experience of seeing my skin darken each summer, a childhood obsessed with a fear of racial inferiority, my persistent nostalgia for the immigrant culture that formed my childhood--made me alone anxious about the culture of the classroom. When I began to rehearse my story of cultural dislocation publically, however, I found my listeners willing to admit to a similar movement from their own pasts. Equally impressive was the fact that many were not from non-white racial groups. That made me realize that one can grow up to enter the culture of the academy and find it a "foreign" culture for a variety of reasons--ranging from economic status to religious heritage. But why, I next wondered, was it that though there were so many of us who came from childhood cultures alien to the academy's we voiced our uneasiness to one another and to ourselves so infrequently? There was a more acute way of asking that question and I will use a large part of this paper to answer it: why did it take me so long to acknowledge publically the cultural costs I was paying to earn a Ph.D. in Renaissance English literature? Why exactly am I writing these words only now that my connection to my past barely survives except as nostalgic memory?

I

Looking back, any human being hazards always a disorienta-

tion. One risks losing hold of the present and being only confounded by the corridors of the past. Which is one of the reasons the good autobiographer always waits for a strong sense of self-possession before remembering his past in detail. For the child who moves from a culture dramatically lacking academic traditions to the classroom, looking back can jeopardize the certainty he has about the desirability of the new culture. Richard Hoggart's description, in The Uses of Literacy, of the cultural pressures on such a student, the "scholarship boy," helps make the point. The "scholarship boy" must give nearly unquestioning allegiance to academic culture, Hoggart argues, if he is to succeed at all, so different is the milieu of the classroom from the culture he leaves behind. This is one of the reasons that such students are often successful only at the price of intellectual and social conformity to the conventions of their new society. For a time, the "scholarship boy" may try to balance his loyalty between the gregarious and concretely experienced family environment and the self-locating, mental culture of the classroom. In the end, he must choose between worlds: if he intends to succeed as a student, he must literally and figuratively separate himself from the room alive with the family's noises and find a quiet setting to be alone with his thoughts.

After a while, one milieu comes to seem more "natural" to him. The kind of allegiance the new student might once have given his parents is transferred thereafter to the teacher, the new parent. And once without the support of the old ties

and certainties, he obeys assumptions and practices of the present almost mechanically. The "scholarship boy" substitutes a remarkable enthusiasm for the loss he might otherwise feel. (David Riesman has already noted the habit of persons from non-literate cultures who learn to read and immediately want to read everything they can get their hands on. And this brings to mind, too, those Victorian working men, Richard Altick describes in The English Common Reader, who not only taught themselves how to read but went on and read the most substantial titles in Western Civilization's canon.)

The progress of Hoggart's "scholarship boy" traces the shadow of my own past. Coming from a home that was primarily Spanish-speaking, for example, I had to decide to forget Spanish when I began my education. Today, this is a hard decision to justify; then, however, my ties to Spanish formed the basis of my deepest sense of relationship to my family. To succeed in the classroom, psychologically I needed to sever my ties with Spanish. It represented an alternate culture as well as another language. Though I recently taught myself how to read Spanish, the language I see on the printed page is not associated in my mind with the language I heard in my youth. That other Spanish, the spoken Spanish, I remember with nostalgia and guilt. Guilt, because I cannot explain to aunts and uncles the reason I do not answer their questions any longer in their language. Nor am I able to explain to teachers of mine in graduate school, who regularly expect me to read and speak Spanish with ease, why my very ability to reach graduate school

and become a student of English literature required me to loosen my attachments to a language I spoke years earlier. Yet, having lost the ability to participate in Spanish by speaking it, I never forgot it so totally that I could not understand it. Rather, I would hear it spoken on the street and those sounds would act to remind me of the community I once felt a part of, and still could care deeply about. I never so forgot Spanish so thoroughly, in other words, to be able to move beyond the range of its nostalgic pull.

Such moments of guilt and nostalgia were, however, just that--momentary. They punctuated my history of successful transition to the classroom. Perhaps they even encouraged it. Whenever I felt myself waver in my determination, my hold on the conventions of academic life grew tighter.

My parents could raise deeper, more persistent doubts. Though they offered encouragement to my brothers and me in our work, they spoke, jokingly and seriously, about the way education was putting "big ideas" into our heads. When we would come home, for example, and precociously challenge assumptions we had believed earlier, they would be forced to defend their beliefs (which increasingly they did less well) or more frequently to submit to our logic with the disclaimer: "It's what we were taught in our time to believe. . . ." More important, especially after we would begin to leave home for college, they voiced regret about how "changed" we had become, how much farther away from one another we had grown. Theirs was a nostalgia obviously for a family that existed before education

assumed our primary loyalty. It was a nostalgia, moreover, that was renewed each time they saw their nieces and nephews (none of whom continued in school beyond high school, all of whom speak fluent Spanish) living lives basically obedient to the conventions and assumptions of their parents' culture. If I was already troubled by the time I graduated from high school by that refrain of congratulations ("your parents must be so. . . ."), I realize now how much more difficult and complicated it was for either of them to answer affirmatively, as they saw the cultural ties of the family dissolve.

II

A large part of the reason my parents were willing to pay the price of alienation from their children and continue to encourage me to become a "scholarship boy" was that they saw the relationship, as others of the lower classes have, between education and social mobility. Lacking the former made them acutely aware of its necessity as prerequisite for the latter. So they sent their children off to school in the hopes of something "better" beyond education. Notice carefully the assumption here was that education was something of a tool or license, a means to an end. This has been a familiar way those in the lower or working-classes have seen education's value in the past. As a result, the children of the working class are often not aware initially of the fact that education is doing more to or for them than providing basic skills, tools and certificates of proficiency. That education might alter

the student in more basic ways even while it provides such "tools" comes as a surprise for most, when and if it does come at all.

Complicating further my status as a "scholarship boy" in the last ten years was the rise, in the mid-1960's, of what was then called "the Third World Student Movement". Racial minority groups, led principally by articulate black intellectuals, began to press for greater access to higher education. The assumption of these critics of the university was--like the assumption of fellow, white working-class families--that educational opportunity was needful as a means of economic and social advancement. The racial minority leaders went one step further, however. The university was literally to "count" the importance of the new minority students and the new students themselves in the context of a larger society of non-white citizens.

It was this step that was probably most revolutionary. Minority students came to the campus with a sense that they were representative of larger groups of people, that, indeed, they were advancing the condition of entire societies by their matriculation. Actually, this assumption was not completely new to me. Years before, educational success was something my parents urged me to strive for precisely because it would reflect favorably on <u>all</u> Mexican-Americans, specifically it would help deflate the stereotype of the "dumb Pancho," a figure who summarized for my parents the assumptions of the racist. This early goal was only given new public endorsement

by the rhetoric of the Third World spokemen. But it was the fact that I felt myself suddenly much more a public Mexican-American that was to prove so crucial for me during these years.

What exactly was the relationship envisioned here uniting the minority group academic and his community? Rarely were there answers clearly formulated by either the minority group intellectuals or by the college administrators who accepted their thesis. One college admissions officer assured me one day that he recognized my importance to his school precisely as coming from the fact that after graduation I would surely be "going back to (my) community." Lately, teachers of mine who have urged me not to trouble over the fact that I am not "representative" of my culture assure me that I can serve as a "model" for those still in the barrio working towards academic careers. This is the premise that I hear too when I am being interviewed for a future faculty position. The interviewers almost invariably assumes that somehow, because I am racially a Mexican-American, I can serve as a kind of special counselor to minority students. The expectation is that I still retain the capacity for intimacy with "my people."

This new way of thinking about the possible uses of education, I propose, made minority groups' entrance into higher education so dramatic. Notice simply the assumption implied by my own last sentence: when the minority student was accepted into the academy, he came--in everyone's mind--as a "group." When I began college, I barely attracted attention except perhaps as a slightly exotic ("Are you from India?") brown-skinned

student; by the time I graduated, my presence was annually noted by, among others, the college public relations office as "one of the fifty-two students with Spanish surnames enrolled this year." In one sense, the minority student, by having his presence announced to the campus in this way was unlike any other "scholarship boy" the campus had seen before. In another way, the minority student only dramatized more publically, if also in new ways, the issues of cultural dislocation education forces, issues which are not solely racial in origin: This will be my thesis for the last part of this essay. When Richard Rodriguez <u>became</u> a Chicano, the dilemmas I had as a "scholarship boy" earlier became complicated but, finally, not altered by the fact that I assumed a group identity.

It had always been easy enough for, say, the upward-bound, lower class student to overlook the price that education was making him pay for his mobility. The strength of his ambition could, with the encouragement from parents and others that somehow education was only a means to an end, postpone cultural concerns. A minority student like me seemingly would have a harder time evading the cultural costs of education since having to "look back" to the community he represented, there would be more occasion for recognizing the gulf widening between that community and himself. Perhaps, theoretically. In practice, the assurance that I heard, that somehow I was being useful to my community by being a student was gratefully believed because it gave one a way of dealing with the guilt and cynicism

that resulted each year when scholarships, grants, and, lately, job offers from schools which a few years ago would have refused me admission as a student, became easy to "win." Each year, it became harder to believe that one's success had anything to do with one's performance and harder to resist the conclusion that it was due to one's relationship to the larger group of people from one's racial group off-campus. When I drove to the airport, on my way to London as a Fulbright fellow last year, leaving behind cousins of my same age who were hopelessly burdened already by financial insecurity and dead-end jobs, momentary guiltiness could be relieved by the thought that somehow my trip was beneficial to persons other than myself. But, of course, if the thought was a way of dealing with the guilt, it was also the reason for it. Sitting in a university library, I would notice a janitor of my own race and grow uneasy: I was, I knew, in a sense a beneficiary of his condition. With the guilt there was a cynicism. Even the most dazzlingly talented minority students I know today refuse to believe that their success is based on their own talent or, even, that when they speak in a classroom anyone hears them as anything but <u>the</u> minority voice. It should come, therefore, as no surprise, though initially it probably seemed puzzling to some, that so many of the angriest voices on the campus against the injustices of racism came from those not visibly its primary victims.

How, then, could one admit to cultural dislocation? It was necessary that one believe the rhetoric about the value of one's

presence on campus simply as a way of living with one's "success." Among ourselves, however, minority students often admitted to a shattering sense of loss, the feeling that somehow, something was happening to us. Especially from students less accustomed than I had, by that time, become to the campus, I remember hearing confessions of discomfort and isolation. Our close associations, the separate dining room tables, and the special dormitories helped to relieve some of the pain.

More significant, for this paper, was the development of the ethnic studies concept and the related assumption of minority students in a number of departments that they could keep in touch with their old cultures by making them the subject of their study. Here again one notices how different the minority student was from other comparable students: another "scholarship boy" came to the academy singly, much more inclined to accept the courses and material he found. The ethnic studies concept was an indication that the new non-white students were not willing to give up their ties with their old societies as easily.

The importance of these new courses was that they introduced the academy to subject matter that genuinely deserved to be studied and they offered a staggering critique of the academy's tendency towards parochialism. This second point, however, most minority group intellectuals never made. They diagnosed more often the reason for, say, the absence of a course on Black literature in an English department, as a case simply of "racism." That it could be an indication of the

fact that academic culture can lose track of human societies and whole areas of human experience was not raised. And never asking such a question, the minority group intellectuals never seemed to wonder either if their own courses could face the same cultural limitations other seminars and classes suffered. As a result, the new minority critics of higher education came to justify the academy's assumptions in a peculiar way. The possibility that academic culture with its courses, footnoted journals and term papers, or solemn libraries could encourage one to grow out of touch with societies beyond its conceptual horizon never was seriously considered.

One heard too often minority students in the last ten years repeat the joke that finally had never been very funny about the non-white intellectual who ended up sounding more "white" than white academics. One heard too in the scorn for such a figure a belief that the new generations of minority students would be able to avoid having to make similar kinds of cultural concessions. The pressures that might lead one to such degrees of conformity went unexamined.

For the last few years my annoyance hearing such jokes was undoubtedly related to the fact that increasingly I was beginning to sense that I was the "bleached" academic the minority students found only laughable. I suppose I had always guessed that <u>something</u> was altering my cultual allegiance as I was being educated. However, only as I finished my course work in graduate school and when, finally, I went to England for my "dissertation year" did the meaning of my cultural move-

ment force itself on me. My year in England was actually the first opportunity to "hear" myself write the kind of material that I would spend my life producing. It was my first chance, too, to be free of the distractions of course work and to be free of the insecurities of trying to "make it." Sitting in the reading room of the British Museum, I no longer doubted that I had joined academic society. Ironically, this immediately made me able to look back to the community I had been part of long before. That I was geographically farther away from my home than I had ever been became metaphorical for the sense of cultural distance I suddenly felt.

But the distance was not pleasing. The reward of feeling a part of the culture (I hesitate to say, "community") of the British Museum was an odd one. Each morning I would come to the reading room and grow increasingly depressed by the silence and what that silence implied--that my life as a scholar would require self-absorption. Who, I started to wonder, would even find my work helpful enough to want to read it? Wasn't the dissertation--with a title alone which would puzzle my relations--only my last exercise in self-enclosure? The sight of the heads around me bent over their texts and papers, engrossed often so thoroughly that many wouldn't look up at the silent clock overhead for hours, made me remember the remarkable noises of communal life in my family home. The tedious prose I was writing, qualified constantly by footnotes, reminded me of the capacity for passionate statement those in my older culture possessed.

As my Chicano past became more clearly an alternate culture--what I have been forced to identify in this paper as "a non-academic culture"--equally clear to me was the fact that I was out of the reach of its benefits. (That I had ever tried to justify my winning of the Fulbright grant in terms of an ultimate utility for "my people" became a sad irony.) The past as I remembered it during those grey English afternoons, came only to define more precisely my present. Simply my remembrance of my youth as a time when I was not restricted to a chair but ran barefoot under a sun that tightened my skin with its white heat each summer, made the fact that it was only my mind which "moved" each hour in the library more obvious.

At times, I did try to figure out where I had "lost touch" with my past, in the hopes of reversing my movement. But the truth was always simple: I started to become alien to my family culture the day I became a "scholarship boy". To realize this in the British Museum made it seem obvious and easy. But when I later returned to America, I returned to minority students who were still speaking of their cultural ties to their past. How was I to tell them what I had learned about myself in England?

A few weeks ago, a group of enthusiastic Chicano undergraduates came to my office to ask me to teach a course to high school students in the <u>barrio</u> on the Chicano novel. This new literature, they assured me, has an important social role to play in helping to shape the consciousness of a people currently without adequate representation in literature. What could I

say? Listening to them I was struck immediately with cultural problems raised by their assumption. So, in the first place, I told them that the novel is not capable of dealing with Chicano experience adequately simply because most Chicanos are not literate or are not comfortably so. This is not something Chicanos need to apologize for (though, I suppose, remembering my own childhood ambition to combat stereotypes of the Chicano as mental menial, it is not something easily admitted). Rather the genius and value of those Chicanos who do not read seem to me to be largely that their reliance on voice, the spoken word, has given them the capacity for intimate conversation that I, as someone who relies heavily on the written word, can only envy. (McLuhan's reminder that the day a student begins to read he learns more than the words on a page strikes me as pertinent here.) So do I really want to teach high school students in the barrio to spend more of their time reading? The second problem, I went on, is a more technical one: the novel is not a form capable of being true to the basic sense of communal life that typifies Chicano culture. What the novel as a literary form is best capable of representing is, in fact, solitary existence, set against a larger social background. This partly helps to explain the appeal the novel had for middle-class, eighteenth century Europeans. They were able to see their own hopes for social mobility justified by a character in the novel who was not limited or defined by a social group or class. Chicano writers, not coincidentally, when they have written novels fail nearly

always to capture the breathtakingly rich family life of most Chicanos. Instead, Chicano novels often describe only the individual Chicano, in transit between Mexican and American cultures.

I said all of this to the Chicano students in my office and could see that little of it made an impression. They seemed, rather, only frustrated by what they thought probably was a slick, academic justification for evading social responsibility. Quietly, after a time, they left me, sitting alone. . . .

III

There is a danger of being misunderstood here. I am not suggesting that an academic cannot re-establish ties of any kind with his old culture. Indeed, he can have an impact on his childhood society, as I have already hinted. I will return to examine this point more carefully later. For the moment, I offer only the more basic reminder: as an academic, one exists in a culture separate from one's non-academic roots and, therefore, any future ties one has with those who remain "behind" are complicated by one's new cultural perspective.

This is the first point. I have to go on now and say that the paradoxical consequence of the distance separating the academic from his non-academic past is that the older culture can begin to seem closer to the academic because he is, in another sense, farther away from it. In this way, it is

possible for the academic to understand the culture of the ghetto or barrio "better" than those who live within it. In my own experience, for example, it has only been as I have come to appraise my past using the categories and notions derived from classes in the social sciences that I have been willing and able to think of Chicano culture in cultural terms at all. The characteristics I took for granted or noticed only separately--the spontaneity, the passionate speech, the trust in concrete experience, the willingness to think communally rather than apart--these are all phenomena meaningful to me now as aspects of a total culture. (My parents have neither the time nor the inclination to think about their culture as a culture.) Able to conceptualize a sense of Chicano culture, I am now also more attracted to that culture than I was before. Indeed, the temptation is to try to preserve those traits of my old culture that I possibly retain.

Those who tell me that the reason I became so preoccupied with the issue of my relationship to my past, in the British Museum, was only that I was farther away from it than I had ever been before are making an accurate observation but one th[illegible] is needlessly simple. What is also true is that the reason I began to think about my past the way I did was because I was no longer a part of it and because I had become an academic with the "tools" to see how a culture that doesn't imagine itself to be a culture, nonetheless, is a culture.

It is, I think, partly possible to account for the racial self-consciousness of minority students during the last few

years in this context. Though the ethnic costumes, the stylized gestures, and idioms are often evasive devices for insisting on one's continuing membership in the community of the past, paradoxically they are also indications that the minority student has gained a new appreciation of his older culture, a new eye for its features and meanings, precisely because of his cultural alienation from it. What that meant in the past was that sometimes Chicano students became more Chicano than most Chicanos. I remember, for example, the surprise of my father when we walked across my college campus one afternoon and came upon two Chicano academics wearing serapes. He and my mother were also surprised--and offended--when they earlier had heard student-activists use the word "Chicano." For them both, the term was a private one. Though it implied the capacity to generalize, the term as they used it was primarily descriptive of persons one knew. It suggested intimacy. When they heard the word shouted through a microphone by a stranger, they were bewildered. What they did not understand was that the student-activist found it easier than they to use "Chicano" in a more public way because his distance from their culture and his membership in academic culture permitted a wider, more abstract view.

The Chicanos who begin to call themselves Chicanos in this new way are actually forming a new version of what it means to be a Chicano. The culture that didn't see itself as a culture is suddenly prized and identified for being one. The price one pays for this new self-consciousness is the knowledge of

just that--it is new--it is not the knowledge of those who remain at home. So the knowledge necessarily separates as well as unites. Wanting more desperately than ever to assert his ties with the newly visible culture, the student is tempted to exploit the characteristics of that culture that might survive in him. But the self-consciousness never allows one to feel completely easy with the old culture. One risks the knowledge that one is only playing at being a Chicano. (I remember, once, in a class I taught, being told by my students that I waved my hands excessively. After that, whenever I saw my hands flying in the air, I would abruptly want to place them onto my lap. To continue waving them made me suspect that I was only play-acting at being a "volatile Latin.")

Worse, the knowledge of the culture of the past often leaves one feeling strangely solitary. At home, I hear relatives speak and "make sense" of too much that they say. The concepts derived from cultural anthropology embarrass me as I sit in the family kitchen. I keep feeling myself no better than a cultural voyeur--somehow dishonest because of what I am thinking. I come away from such gatherings suspecting, in fact, that the concepts I have are only illusions. Because they were never there before, because no one back home shares them, I grow not to trust their reliability: too often they seem no more than mental bubbles, floating only in the academic's eye.

More easy to live with and distinguishable from self-conscious awareness of the past are the ways the past unconsciously survives (perhaps, even it still survives in me). Many who have

taught minority students in the last-decade can testify to sensing characteristics of a childhood culture still alive in such students. Should the teacher make these students aware of such gifts? Initially, most of us probably answer negatively. We trust the unconscious survival of the past more than the sometimes only clownish, always problematical re-creations of it. But the former cannot be insured of survival. They can be lost; perhaps many characteristics are lost simply because the student is never encouraged to look for them. Even those that do survive do so tenuously; they are not subject to full exploitation by the student. One is left, as a teacher, only hoping that the quality will have an impact, a possibility for on-going survival.

The issue becomes less acute with time. Each year, the chance that the student is unaware of his old gifts is diminished as his academic reflectiveness grows more habitual. That is not completely a negative conclusion. Though the conceptual tools of the academy make innocence about one's Chicano culture less likely, those same conceptual tools increase the desire to want to write and speak about that past. The paradox persists.

IV

Awaiting the "scholarship boy" who finally acknowledges the fact that he sees reality differently is the dilemma of action. Because he knows that his academic culture is different from that of his past, he realizes that his return home will necessarily mean the alteration of cultures, as they are exposed,

one to the other. To repeat the earlier example: I can, as a teacher of literature, return home and organize a class in "the Chicano novel." But if I do, I will act to change social structures in a society I deeply admire. This raises the problem: one, literally at least, can go home again; one does go home again. The question is, what does one do when one gets there?

The sentimental reaction to this knowledge (one I admit I especially need to resist) entails merely a refusal to renew contact with one's non-academic culture in order not to contaminate it. Those holding this position acknowledge, rightly, what academics otherwise are less willing to admit, that the way the academic studies experience makes him unable to study particular kinds of experience without distorting them. The problem, however, with this sentimental solution is that it overlooks the way the culture of the academy makes one capable of dealing with the transactions of mass society. Academic culture with its habits of conceptualization and abstraction allows those of us from cultures which are not academic to deal with each other in a mass society. In this sense, the culture of the classroom does have a profound political impact. Though socially mobile people often only think of education as a means to an end, education does become an end: its culture allows one to exist more easily in a society increasingly anonymous and impersonal. Politically, as a result, there were doubtless advantages gained when Marx (from his chair in the reading room of the British Museum) taught those in the

English working classes to think of themselves as members of a larger society of workers. For similar reasons, it is not enough for me to say now that non-literate people have remarkable gifts those of us who are culturally adopted children of Gutenberg lack. The truth is that literacy brings the capacity for communicating with and understanding such things as bureaucracies. (The tragic inability of those in the barrio and ghetto a few years ago to catch onto the "tricks" of corresponding with an organization like the Selective Service System in ways college students were able to do underscores the point.)

If the sentimental reaction to non-academic culture is to fear changing it, the political response, typical especially of working class and lately minority group leaders is to see education and the academy solely in terms of political and social goals. The cultural consequences of that change are disregarded. At this time in history when we are so acutely aware of social and economic inequality, it seems nearly quixotic to warn those who are working to bring social mobility to the oppressed that education alters culture as well as economic status. And, yet, if there is one criticism I, as a minority student, must make of minority group leaders in their past attack on the "racism" of the academy, it is that they didn't distinguish between my right to higher education and the desireability of my actually entering the academy. Which is another way of saying again that they didn't recognize there were things I could lose by becoming a "scholarship boy."

Minority groups have been remarkably quiet in the last few months as we have heard those critics of Affirmative Action programs who talk only of what the academy has been doing for the minority student--"reverse discrimination," it's called. The real question that no one seems to ask is not why the minority student needs to "catch up" to the lofty standards of higher education, but why higher education needs the minority student now. Why, in other words, has the academy so few minority group students and faculty members in the first place? The traditional answer that minority groups came up with, that the institution was simply "racist," let us evade the other possible answer: that the academy simply forgot to notice the absence of black and brown faces in the classroom. There is, I think, a cultural price to be paid for such things as reading too much or sitting too long in the British Museum--something my uncles long ago would remind me of when they told me that my books would make me "womanish." They used the wrong words to say something basically important and that is simply that one easily finds oneself growing out of touch with particular societies and realities by living a life of mental activity.

In search of a more hopeful way of reconciling the academic and non-academic cultures, I turn again to the possibility of the conscious and unconscious survivals of the past. There are problems with both solutions, as I've indicated already. Why I depend on both, however, is that they each recognize that if the past is to survive into the present, it will only be as it accommodates itself to certain, sometimes harsh, realities of

academic culture. Perhaps therefore there is an alternative to the sentimentalist who would be afraid to teach Chicano audiences how to read or to the reformer who would be so enthusiastic about teaching them how to read that he would overlook gifts they already have. For example: perhaps with a sense that his students "know" things about language already, a teacher can encourage his students to try to find literary alternatives to the novel, a communal literature, perhaps, which will be friendlier to the social life of the old culture they leave behind as they start to read.

To suggest such a hopeful possibility should not make us less prepared to admit that the academy changes those from alien cultures more than it is changed. Though minority groups did have an impact on higher education, largely because of their "advantage" in coming as a group, within the last few years students like me, those finally who "made it" and ended up certified as academics did end up sounding more like the academics we found when we came onto the campus that they did like us.

I do not enjoy making such admissions. Nor do I enjoy merely pointing out errors minority group critics of education made. The criticism is useless largely because, for reasons this paper already points out--the insecurity of movement between cultures; the necessity of those in search of social mobility to overlook cultural questions; the conceptual skills which allow one to want to preserve one's old culture imply that one is separated from it--delay in asking questions about cultural costs of education was inevitable. This essay is written

less in the spirit of a critique of old errors, than as a reminder to all of us who have been "scholarship boys" that education and its Cartesian faiths exact a large price from us all. And what is sadder to consider, after we have paid that price, we go home and casually change the societies we find. My parents today understand how they are "Chicanos" in a large and impersonal sense. The gains from such knowledge are clear. But too are the reasons for regret.

One last reflection: social scientists, to my knowledge, have not commented upon the difficulty a number of minority students have in the very last stages of their careers. In fact, most of the minority students I know who are leaving the campus with a severe lack of desire to "go on" have been graduate students, many well advanced in their studies--some with as few as a single requirement to complete. To observers, it probably seemed strange that these students could decide so late against a career that it took twenty years, sometimes as many as twenty-five years, to reach. It might seem strange--unless there are only insights one can have at the end of one's career, when one can, for the first time, measure the benefits of education finally against the costs paid.

THE BURDEN OF SUCCESS: WOMEN IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

by Anne Robinson Taylor

When the Wright Institute asked graduate students to submit autobiographical essays, we were not surprised to find that graduate students feel neither happy nor successful, no matter at what stage they are in the process. Almost every essay expressed concern with whether students could maintain their identities while undergoing the hardships that graduate school imposes. From social scientist, to performing artist to law student, all feel that they barely hold themselves together under the pressure. For the most part graduate school seems to these students a demeaning process, one that is deliberately set up to test the students, but perhaps more accurately, to subject the student to the rigors of deprivation. The deprivations are many, but the most obvious ones involve the loss of money, the loss of companionship, and the inability to act out an adult role. From what most students say, the graduate process is a lonely, threatening business; and the great task seems to be to emerge from the process with the self intact.

For women, and minorities too, the threat becomes more intense since not only does the graduate process try to tell a student what to become, but so does the culture from which these students are coming. At the very least however, dropping out or quitting is not quite the failure for a woman

that it is for a man. As one student puts it, "Men don't have the same kinds of face-saving alternatives open to them, and pressure to earn the doctorate must be an even more intense kind of hell for them." The impulse in women to run toward the academic identity is strong, and they seem to accept very readily the process of being socialized into a discipline. Unlike minority students, who feel love, albeit somewhat ambivalent, for the culture they come from, no such feeling is obvious in women graduate students. Anything is better than being the prom queen or the housewife.

Many of the essays were written by older women returning to the process and we would assume that the views of a younger group would reflect new values placed on female achievement. As I read over this paper, I see that I myself assume a highly critical view of this problem - the wish to make oneself over into an academic entity. And yet I can see in my own life how eager I have always been to tell people that I'm not just a housewife or "woman" but rather someone who does something <u>real</u>.

When I moved to Washington D.C. several years ago and was six months pregnant, (teaching English at the University of Baltimore), I called a gynecologist to make an appointment. Instead of talking about my condition I was overwhelmingly interested in telling him I had a job. Finally I managed to insert this somewhere in the conversation, and

I might add at an utterly irrelevant moment. He paused and said, "Well, you won't be working when you go into the delivery room, will you?" I laughed, but then was appalled at my quite strong impulse to inform him that motherhood was not destroying my mind, or that it was not destroying my self as I knew it. I dislike this impulse to deny that I'm a woman--and dislike seeing it in others. The ensuing criticisms of women graduate students should be understood in this light.

In a sense men have already been socialized into the graduate school mentality; what we might call the cowboy ethic revisited. Only fools and knaves would say that graduate school is a halcyon period of reflection radically different let us say from the competitive struggles of a rising insurance executive. Students consider graduate school a dog-eat-dog arena. Women come from a different kind of culture, one that has its own set of values and even, if we are to believe recent linguistic studies, its own language. And so women not only have to learn the language of their particular discipline, but even to a certain extent of the male world. In the process they see themselves giving up much of the training and life that has gone before. Women are more than ready to take on this new identity, although their mood is wry, cynical and occasionally self-mocking. They are aware of the various tricks necessary to survive the process and seem almost eager to engage in them. So immersed are they in the obstacles and hurdles placed in their way that detachment from the process

becomes impossible. These activities give women a sense of pleasure and accomplishment that often seems to deny them the opportunity to look at what kind of world view is replacing their old one.

The worship that women have for professors reflects a larger and more general characteristic of these graduate students, male and female alike. And that is their elitism. Almost all of them feel that they are suffering these assorted deprivations because they are being allowed into the hignest professional place that society has to offer. Never mind that there aren't jobs and that the pay is low. To be a Ph.D. is to reach the pinnacle. Many of the bad things are done to them because "misfits and those who are unworthy must be prevented from getting through the program." Since all students feel that they are going through a process that will certify them as the best and the brightest, they are willing to undergo deprivation. But this view of the privileged elite causes problems for women. They are often conscious that they have warring views of themselves. They tend to feel a conflict between the inner and the outer, as if they might be frauds and imposters. Just as one becomes Cinderella or the perfect housewife because that role has prefixed boundaries, so too one might feel that the academic role is equally predefined. The sense of conflict is there, but as I said, women really <u>want</u> to become the perfect academic and, by and

large, try very hard to prove that this is what they have become or are about to become. So I came to expect a section of almost every essay that listed the qualifications of the woman and then went on to assert her right to be where she is. It was as if she were putting her identity down on paper, to make it more real, perhaps? But it was also an identity strictly in the academic mode--one's jobs, one's credentials, one's self-importance. Given this sort of over-identification with the academic role, we would assume that women wouldn't be particularly interested in bringing about change in the academic system, mainly because they cherish their new selves and feel very tied to the emotional qualities demanded of someone in the academic profession.

What kind of culture or world is it that women see themselves coming from? If the woman is older (and we had a number of such essays) she sees herself leaving the world of the home. If the woman is younger, she sees herself leaving the cute seductive role. Ave Maria Longley comments that "The universe from which the housewife has operated has its own set of mannerisms and symbols that are frequently incongruous in the classroom situation." The style of the housewife is different from that of the academic as are her sources of knowledge.

> Moreover, the referral system of the housewife is often based on everyday common sense experiences, and these kinds of resources can produce less than bantam clout in the intellectual arena where one supports arguments by

> citing research or the Masters of the discipline.
>
> The mundane business of marriage and motherhood has nothing to do with the sophisticated arguments that are peculiar to each discipline.

Whatever one has done in the home, it is seen as something to run from. One student says that going to graduate school means "the discovery that I am not a failure, not just a housewife--I am capable, I am competent, I can do it, I am ME."

Younger women in our contests were equally ready to abandon the cute little girl approach.

> After all, when one is a 22 year old blue-eyed blonde, attractive and witty, it's not difficult to learn winning approaches. My "cute little incompetent" appearance and laugh worked almost as well in Las Vegas as it did at the local garage in Austin when I needed the car out in "just a real big special hurry."

Both of these roles tend to make women unreal somehow. Barbara de Shong became aware that the cutie act,

> was not the only "Me," since, inside another track of thought and feeling was operating. Inside someone was asking, "Who is this entertainer using my voice and body?" Certainly this cute shell person was able to get people to like her and take care of her. I had developed an alien person who smiled, played cute, laughed and was frequent winner of games. But this cute winning person was not real. And the person inside could see that.

In opposition to he world of the housewife or showgirl is that of the career woman. I was disturbed by the ease with which another image, again created by men, conditioned even the view of the successful woman. One student wrote an entire essay comparing herself to Rosalind Russell.

> Always in motion in her pin stripe suite, Rosalind Russell was the visible woman ... She never gave up: whether a reporter, a lawyer, a professor, or an executive she was always that fast talking square-shouldered one-in-a-million career woman, an actual participant in the real world, and the only woman I knew of who had escaped the home.

Notice the emphasis on actual, on real. What bothers me is not that the role of housewife is considered unreal, but that whatever opposes it is the real world. This means that the great male world of competition, money-making, and never-ending, upward spiral career is considered more real than, let's say, taking care of children, or creating some kind of social life. At the very least, the work at home involves caring and responsibility. Certainly this is better than being on the assembly line. Of course, intelligent women wish to engage in abstract thought and get paid for it. What surprises me is their whole-hearted belief that graduate school will supply the missing element in their lives or will make them over into someone wholly adequate.

> We sat around a dark oak table facing our professor and I remember feeling an exultant anticipation: here at last I would be free to behave as an adult, a scholar, a fully functioning human being, one who learned and one who taught.

No one would quarrel with the sentiment, but there is no cautionary note here at all.

Among men, and certainly among women, the sense is that the academic profession is the highest in the land. All the arcane lore and mysterious rites of passage have to do with

the difficulty of being let in to such a profession. Professors become gods and hurdles like oral exams become tests of one's ultimate worth. I don't think male graduate students feel much differently about these things, although they're less open about saying so. Women seem simply more whole-hearted in their dependence and even worship.

One student comments about an excruciating oral exam in which an examiner offers her a pretzel to chew on for her nerves:

> I was very much touched by this gesture of tenderness and concern by one of the cold, rational deities who was about to evaluate my performance ....

Sitting down to look at the questions posed on a written comprehensive exam, Doris Lindsey recalls herself;

> reading and re-reading the questions prepared for us by some of the most distinguished Mephistophelean professors in the English department. Such diabolical wording of questions, such subtlety of phrasing could only emanate from re-incarnated members of the Spanish Inquisition.

An exaggeration, meant to be flippant to some extent, and yet students often do really view professors as some species of god. Another student calls them "powerful authority figures who are deities in my agnostic intellectual pantheon." And still, after she has related a perfectly horrible example of professional insensitivity, she goes on to say:

> Today my professors are friendly, encouraging, dedicated to learning and to inspiring that dedication in others. In some cases they are

> internationally known, consultants to our own and foreign governments as well as the United Nations.

So women praise their professors even when bad things happen and tend to see confrontations with them as wholly deserved challenges to their identity. Patricia Manning tells of a professor important to her academic career:

> I have been fortunate in my teachers; they are all fine academics. However, the finest of them all is the one who has given me the most difficulty. For one of my papers, I chose to write a "neo-functional" critique of marriage. When he handed it back to me, his eyes narrowed and he hissed, "You are a ferocious woman." The grade was an A, but I knew I had touched a nerve in some tenderer part of his psyche. Later, in a seminar, he was to bang on the table and yell at me; I banged and yelled back, then wept for three days. It has always been a contest of wills between us.

But whatever the stresses of this relationship, she comments that "It helped me with a humane tradition, and in so doing I was given a Self." No one will deny that relationships with professors are important, but women often report that combat with a male professor was pivotal in their attempt to gain a sense of competence.

If the men are gods in this system, then those who do manage to get a Ph.D. must be special beings indeed. Men as well as women feel that their very selves are being judged worthy. One student comments "That tentative year of probation (1962-1963) had given me the freedom and opportunity to discover my own strengths in the areas which I saw as crucial filtering out points, namely statistics and

quantitative methods. Conquering those hurdles certified me for teaching and research roles which addicted me to the rewards of academic life." And so those less intelligent get filtered out, weeded out, and as women ascend the air gets thinner and thinner. Some begin to see that the Ph.D. has more symbolic value than anything else.

> The doctorate had taken on a whole new set of symbolic meanings. It shifted from the status of means, as a union card to get me paid to spend the rest of my life teaching and doing research, to that of ultimate value, as in the secular equivalent of salvation in the religious sense.

But then a kind of paralysis might begin to set in as one student very clearly puts it:

> Such lofty definition of the meaning of the doctorate imposes very high standards of performance to justify earning it. Only the smartest, most diligent scholars who know everything there is to know in their fields deserve to pass through the gates of Paradise. Such a lofty definition of the doctorate is also calculated to produce failure for mere mortals, particularly mere female mortals who have internalized norms and values which lead them to discriminate against themselves.

Clearly men have similar feelings. The problem arises for women because they put such a low value on whatever they were doing before.

In order to get to the very top, women realize that they to some extent must become like men and adopt a highly competitive ethic. After all, graduate school is a kind of jungle, and one woman says, "each of us knew that in graduate studies it was every man, or woman, for himself."

Competing successfully in graduate school also implies the ability to make it in the larger competition that is the outside world. Janice Hogle says,

> I now have a liberal arts degree in anthropology; in August I may have another. What does it imply? The job market will be no better, even though I may succeed in clawing my way a little above the rumbling crowd where the smog is thinner and the degree-wavers are somewhat fewer."

Women seem to be more aware that this kind of competition is not always healthy, but they are all drawn into it and made to take pleasure in it as part of the price of being in graduate school.

> I began tentatively to broach the subject with my fellow students during time outs at the union and discovered that generally they defended what we were doing as training for the world. "It's like that out there," they nodded grimly, beowulfs with briefcases. A fat young man who wore ties and horn rim spectacles and a superbly scornful upper lip had missed several seminar meetings in a row and happened to return the day he was to present a paper. He had no paper. I watched his slow and skillful humiliation with what I can only describe as satisfaction: he had played badly and he paid with dark gouts of blood left cruelly under the skin, blocking his brain against ever--ever--learning again.

Women are eager, almost gleeful at the thought of entering the competitive fray. They are even happier to announce their qualifications for what they are doing. I came to expect at the end of each essay a kind of statement of the value of the writer. Many of these students seemed to anticipate the question of a skeptical judge. And the question was, "Who are you and what right do you

have to be in graduate school?" One student announced:

> I have a skill and knowledge to contribute. I wish to be paid adequately. The campus is a vital environment for my growth and development. The university is a tool for me to use to accomplish my goals. As a citizen of this state, I have a right to be here, as I qualify for admission.

State residency comes as a shocker at the end of this passage, and hardly seems a criterion for being in graduate school. Another much more aggressive statement sounds like this:

> Most important, I've come out, cautiously but with purpose, tenuously and extravagently, setting out my wars and building up my vita as I enter the second year of our five year plan ... I'm encouraged. I've finally got an active imagination about the working me and am getting close to the jobs I've imagined. I've got the confidence and the will to earn money and be productive by applying my heightened consciousness to a life that's ripe for any woman-most-likely ready to demand the right to participate in the world outside the home.

The breezy tone, the light-hearted willingness to assault the world (or the attempt to simulate this tone)--these are very characteristic of our writers. But why do women have to protest so much? Instead of feeling that these women are competent, I begin to wonder why they are telling me this over and over.

The discomfort at the new identity that women graduate students have forged comes out in their feeling uneasiness and worry about who they really are. Hence long lists of their qualifications are meant to tell us

that they definitely are part of the academic world. Just as when house wife or prom queen feels that she has adopted a phony self, one that is dancing to someone else's tune, the female academic sometimes feels that she's a fraud. Ruth Laney comments that "often I felt like an imposter, merely playing at being what everyone else simply and ineffably was."

Women's eagerness to adopt the academic role, to rise high in the intellectual pantheon and to forget whatever she was taught to be before probably means that these women at least will be very conservative members of schools and colleges. The meaning of the discipline, substantive questions of how it makes you think, the kinds of demands it makes in terms of remaking the self, these don't seem to bother women. They're too busy escaping. For men the process certifies that they are worthy thinkers; for women it certifies first that they are functioning human beings and second that they are worthy to be among the elite. The investment in the system as is becomes very high indeed.

There is one area that women take much more seriously than men as academics, and that is teaching. Women tend to talk more about their teaching experiences than men, even the failures they've had. One woman comments about her students:

> They also knew that I had a great capacity to love them all--the good students and the poor ones, the class participants and the nuisances. By respecting them and being fair with them, I was loved and appreciated in return. I think it was

> precisely this feeling of mutual admiration that somewhat alleviated my burden of graduate studies.

Sometimes this caring gets quite intense, as Lucy Sells recalls:

> I took my sociological responsibility for the survival of my students as seriously as I had taken my biological responsibility for my sons, in my earlier incarnation as SuperMother.

How exactly could women integrate their past lives, past culture into the world of the academic? Let us assume that everyone who becomes a university professor possesses similar attributes; the ability to think abstractly, the ability to sustain these thoughts, and get them across to people younger than themselves. Ideally the female academic would show concern for her students and be able to create settings in which students could feel comfortable. She could defuse the heavily competitive aspects of class, because this combat is foreign to her nature. Since women have been brought up to accept a certain amount of self-abnegation, the brightest ones should be able to let other people talk, let others shine. How many of us have sat in class and heard the dazzling intellectual performance of a male academic, a performance meant to shut everybody else out? I once studied American literature, with a professor like that. Though I didn't learn much about American literature, I certainly saw how witty someone could be <u>about</u> the subject.

This description of the female academic probably sounds more like the ideal professor of any sex: someone

not only an academic but also a fully functioning human being, someone who accepts a new role but doesn't hate or reject the old.

Lessons of Relation

by Peter Marin

As far as I can see, the various radical movements or alternatives which have emerged these past few years in relation to education are less concerned with education than with what one must call freedom. In almost all of them pedagogical concern gives way to something larger, more significant: a desire not to "improve" the schools, but to move past them into the world, to replace them with the world. What is called into question continually are the assumptions we ordinarily and mindlessly make about education without ever examining them. Without hesitation those assumptions are set aside, replaced by a more basic and sustaining concern: the world of unmanaged experience lying just beyond the institutional constraints we put upon it. Critics like Illich, Goodman, Kozol and even John Holt or Jim Herndon reject not only the methods of the schools, but also their structure and function, their existence itself. They all feel we would be better off without them, and even when the existence of schools is taken for granted, when the hope of doing away with them is set aside, no faith is put in them; they are simply understood as a permanent condition, a kind of weather, in which one does whatever is sensible, possible.

It is important to understand, in a general way, the reasoning behind that attitude. Though it varies from critic to critic, I would characterize it as a shared rejection of the institutionalization of experience, a reaction to the state's monopoly of the imagination, time and energy of the young, and an attempt to establish radical, communitarian alternatives to it. What is clear to all cases is that the damaging effects of the schools are perceived as being neither accidental nor incidental to their purposes; they are understood to be the inevitable and even intentional result of the aims of the schools. Though some critics do not say so explicitly, almost all of them see past the usual myths and rhetoric of schooling to what the schools really are: the underpinning of the nation-state, the American empire. That perception is what moves them in the directions they take, away from a belief in small changes and toward more sweeping criticisms and solutions, for they understand that the schools are designed to do precisely what they do: define a social and psychic reality for the young, reproduce it in and through them, diminish whatever volition, energy and imagination seem at odds with that reality.

In short, the schools serve the state, and since the state they serve is an empire, they do what the institutions of empire have always done: they substitute for localized, volitional and organic relation the coercive, authoritarian and hierarchical relations which form the skeletal structure of the institution itself. They exhibit the characteristics

that Lewis Mumford insists are the main institutional processes of empire: standardization, mechanization and quantification. As in the early theocratic states like Egypt or Babylonia, or the great centralized modern states, those processes become in our schools the standards of efficiency against which all activity is measured. The schools monopolize and occupy time, energy, space and imagination, laying upon them an artificial grid of programming, scheduling, tracking and grading. Those primary sources, which belong ideally to the individual and community, which are in fact alive within them, become the institution's property and are doled out in bit and pieces, as if the institution itself was their source: both their custodian and creator. Thus, whatever their own intentions, teachers and administrators find themselves acting, always, through the skeletal form of the schools, and that form is the miniaturized form of empire, the idea of empire made small and frozen into role and ritual. Within that form, as in the organization of all empires, the organic relation of the individual to the world is broken; the young gradually cease to inhabit the world existence. What disappears almost completely is any sense of what it might really mean to be free and self-directive, at home in the community or world. I do not mean by that simply the loss of vision or the dream of being free; I mean also the disappearance of the memory of what community and freedom have meant historically and philosophically. Those ideas are reduced in our traditional pedagogy to pat phrases and self-deceptive techniques. The closed sphere

of the "open classroom" (which is indeed better than what it replaces) comes to stand in our fuddled minds for real freedom, space and choice; "individualized instruction" takes the place of relation; the "cognitive and affective domains" are mistaken for the full range of passionate and variable experience. The wide range of human possibility is everywhere trivialized, reduced to technique, to timidity masked as innovation, to control disguised as "help." The rich world dwindles and recedes; our diminished idea of the world takes its place. Slowly, as we adjust ourselves to that idea, we too dwindle, we lose sight of what it is we might have wanted, what it is we have lost or do not yet have.

The schools, of course, are not the only place in which that process occurs. They merely mirror what is going on simultaneously in many other realms: the political process, the media, even the ways we think, see and touch. The schools are simply the area in which we have ritualized it most completely and backed it most fully with the laws of the state. And one cannot even be quite sure whether or not the schools have been consciously designed to produce such a result, for it may simply be the inescapable consequence of something so deep in the culture that it enters out institutions beyond all choice. But whatever the case, it is clear that it is through the systematized destruction of relation and the slow diminishment of existence that the state intrudes itself so completely upon consciousness. To put it simply: in the relational void we create in the schools, the state takes the place

of the world. The state not only surrounds the individual but also establishes itself inside, assumes a life within the individual that circumscribes thought in the same way that action has been circumscribed externally. It becomes a screen, a Chinese wall having the same function as the original wall: to keep the world out, to hold people in.

The effect of all this is a kind of sleep, what we can call "a sleep of empire": the loss of a sense of distance, openness, possibility. So far as pedagogy is concerned it means that the parameters of potential activity grow tighter and smaller, and instead of thinking about ways to help the young or making a larger place for them in the world, we go round and round thinking only about schools. There is, for instance, no graduate school in the country which offers a course in beginning or running a free school -- or, for that matter, in envisioning alternatives of any kind to the massive system of schooling we have. Teachers are still trained everywhere to serve only the state and its schools. That is really no surprise, for teachers are trained in schools, and what can one expect from institutions of that sort save a dedication to their own continuity? They maintain themselves by inhibiting and limiting the imagination of those who pass through them, and the end result is a kind of massive crystallization, a loss of independence, so that it is the state itself which seems to see and speak through persons.

I remember being asked, a few years back, to address a group of San Francisco teachers about their problems with

students and drugs. To introduce me, the superintendent of schools read from something I had written:

> Our schools are now expected to do what has traditionally been the task of the full community. We make them our churches, prisons, and foster homes; teachers become policemen and priests. It is there we hope to salvage civilization and the young--as if the schools were themselves a melting pot, a smelter, in which we can mix and blend and produce by sheer will a workable culture. The school's function becomes the structuring of the ego, the control of behavior, the remaking of personality; wherever we face crises--racial, sexual, or political--we hope to resolve them in the schools.

When he had finished, he paused for a moment, looked at the audience feelingly, then said: "So you see, you and I have a big job to do, and Mr. Marin is here to help us do it."

It is that, precisely, that I mean. What the superintendent could not see was that I was protesting the schools' assumption of responsibility, was arguing that they had neither the expertise nor the right to assume them, and that the answers to such problems lay outside the ordinary activity of the schools. In the paragraphs following the one he had read, I had gone on to say:

> But that won't work. Even when schools change, they change too slowly; we look at the young and believe we know what they need, and the machinery of education cranks and creaks into gear. But by the time the changes are complete, the young have changed again, and we are ready to handle a generation that has already disappeared. The distance between the world of the young and the schools steadily increases -- and so does the damage the schools can do.
>
> The problem, put simply, is that schools have inherited and systematized what is worst in our community and history. What is elsewhere destructive but diffuse and rapidly dissolving is organized in the schools into curriculum and method. The corrosive role playing and demand systems are so extensive, so profound, that nothing really human shows through, and when it does, it appears as frustration, exhaustion, and anger. The young are

> taught neither to be needed alive nor to be free, for one cannot be taught these things at all; they must be lived out in precisely those turbulent human relations the schools destroy. It is that, of course, which is their real outrage: the systematic corruption of the relations of adolescents to one another and adults. Where they should be comrades, allies, equals, and even lovers, the system makes them teacher and student--pawns in a thoughtless game of authority that reveals and changes nothing.

But he had not chosen to read those paragraphs, and I suspect that was not merely because it didn't serve his purposes, but because he also could not quite believe that I meant it. To do so would have called into question his role and the roles of the assembled teachers and the conference itself. Talking with the teachers it became quite clear that most of them identified themselves neither with the students nor their subjects nor even their own personal needs and affections; instead, they identified themselves with the schools, and any question raised about the schools was a question raised about them. Talking to them, one felt like one of those characters in a science-fiction film trying to warn his neighbors about the bugs from outer space and learning, with person after person, that they had already been possessed by them. The teachers too had been possessed, mesmerized. They were so occupied and preoccupied by the myth of the schools that they could not permit themselves to think seriously about their real nature, or alternatives to them.

That is where we are now, surrounded by that kind of sleep, still encapsulated in myth. The growth of alternative movements in education is simply the result of the partial collapse of that myth, the first hint that we might wake from

sleep. At the conference I have described there were at least a few teachers who had, on their own, come to believe in the necessity of a radical change in education, and that is also the case elsewhere; some people have begun to escape from their entrancement, and their resistance to public schooling is what we have come to call an "alternative school movement." Sometimes, as with free-school enthusiasts, that movement has taken the participants out of the schools entirely, though not beyond the idea of schooling itself. At other times, perhaps more often, the movement has manifested itself in the insistence on "school reform": attempts to create within the schools small islands of choice protected as much as possible from the larger structure around them. And, finally, there has been the rapid growth of a third way of seeing things, one less practical and yet somehow more convincing, more liberating, an attempt to free both the young and the imagination itself: the idea of "deschooling," the belief that we ought to eliminate schools altogether, replace them with other ways of being with and educating the young.

Those three approaches are further complicated by the presence within them of two main traditions, often apparently at odds with one another. One tradition is what I would call an organic or existential tradition, and it is based fundamentally on a re-visioning of human nature. Its roots run back and down through the work of A.S. Neill and Paul Goodman to Wilhelm Reich and Freud and a few educators whose work has more to do with a kind of educational communalism than with

pedagogy. It is essentially a "therapeutic" approach, though I use that word reluctantly, knowing no other, and meaning by it simply the belief that the right circumstances, as uncoercive as possible, can be used to allow and restore to the young their natural emotional and animal health. In this view, what lies at the heart of all individual and social health is a depth and freedom of experience: instinctual life, emotional freedom, sexual grace, independence, choice and a community of equals--all of which are taken as the necessary ground of any kind of decent learning.

The second line of thought, most fully expressed in what follows by the essays of Illich and Kozol, is far more political in content. As Kozol suggests, it runs in part back through the freedom schools established during the civil rights movement in the south, and it is also allied with the work of men like Paolo Freire, the radical South American educator whose teaching of literacy is based on the idea of oppressed and "silent" cultures--those who have been deprived by institutions and the state of a language in which to describe the realities of their existence. In this view, the schools are seen as instruments of oppression, the means by which dominant races and classes maintain their power over others. The purpose of educational alternatives, whatever their nature, is to break the state's monopoly on knowledge, to liberate consciousness, and to aid the disenfranchised in regaining the political power and participation they have been denied.

Taken together, these distinctions comprise the major trend of radical educational thought. Within the movement itself, there have been frequent internal disputes and schisms connected to these different ways of seeing things. Sometimes those disputes seem to be almost more important than the attitudes all share toward the public schools--if only because they seem to indicate fundamentally different attitudes about not only education, but also human nature, politics and values. I remember years ago attending a conference to which all of the "leading spokesmen" from the free-school movement had been invited. The differences I have already mentioned surfaced there, and the conference was schismatic, turbulent. A few weeks later, in a piece for a magazine, I had this to say about it:

> What emerged for me was a sense of the distances between various free school groups--in terms of how they define schools, childhood, and aspects of American reality. Some are primarily concerned with the hold institutions exercise on consciousness and experience, and with how educators of all sorts, radicals as well as reactionaries, are hemmed in by the limits of discourse they accept without question. We seem unable to discuss learning or survival unless we do it in terms of schools--and that indeed diminishes what we can say, imagine, and do.
>
> On the edge of thought we have the notion of "deschooling," which is not so much a mode of activity as a thrust of reasoning and imagination. Those who accept the idea are at significant odds with those who see free schools as the only feasible alternative to state schooling. But even among the free school partisans there are divisions. Some seem committed to a Summerhillian, counterculture approach. Others see the Summerhillian method as escapist. They pay less attention to emotional and sexual changes than to questions of political potency and efficacy, and for them the struggle of the blacks

and the poor is the central, usually the only, one. Though it might seem that those two approaches should coexist and feed each other, they are more often than not set against each other. This raises the question of whether, in fact, there really is a single free school "movement." What might be closer to the truth is that some persons are interested in alternative world views and lifestyles, and others are interested in political change. Both groups, at the moment, are experimenting with "free" schools as a way of achieving change--but the allegiances on both sides are not really to new kinds of schooling but to kinds of change.

Beyond both these camps, of course, are the majority of people who are interested in improving our existing schools. In some ways (as in New Orleans) this group draws ideas and inspiration from the free schools' doers and thinkers, even though these people usually feel that their ideas cannot be effectively transferred into the state's schools.

Sooner or later, in any discussion, these differences surface. The result is that there is no semblance of unanimity among those who believe in public schooling and no semblance of it among those who oppose public schooling. Both camps contain radically different views of the function of the state, the nature of learning, definitions of reality, society, the person--and the relations among them. Unfortunately, those views are rarely clarified. Were they expressed carefully and fully, the lines might not be drawn fuzzily, as they are now, between deschooling, free schooling, and public schooling. We might, instead, confront directly such issues as the relation between individual and state; the definitions of cultural and private value; our underlying historical direction; the nature of political reality and religious meaning; the relation of knowledge and experience. But because we are not accustomed to talking in clear detail about those issues, they are reduced (as in New Orleans) to fogged and meaningless arguments about schooling.

One sees, finally, that imagination has outstripped reality. Many of those who theorize about schooling have come to the end of the line and now speak only about deschooling. They realize precisely how schooling itself infringes upon both

> thought and action. But parents, teachers, and students are still stuck in schools 100 years out of date. They are trying to make changes that should have been made decades ago and are now too tardy to be of use. Yet they still must fight to make them, for what else can they do? That was the situation in New Orleans. The local audience had come to learn how to make small, difficult, and necessary changes, while many of the speakers had already discarded those changes as being essentially useless, reactionary, and wasteful. The experts were hoping to move their listeners to a general reconsideration of the whole problem. But the necessary connections between people were made imperfectly, fitfully, and what became increasingly clear was the growing distance between thought about education and the reality of the schools, and how we flounder in the space between them.

Now, rereading that piece, I find that I would put things a bit differently. The differences I mention are no doubt there, and they are not trivial ones, but in some way, at a distance, they seem complementary and not antagonistic. Things are so awful now for the young that it does not matter much where one chooses to help them--in or out of schools--so long as that help involves an increase for them in independence and choice. I used to think that was possible only outside the state's schools, but that view now seems to me too absolute, too luxurious. Certainly teachers like Jim Herndon or Herb Kohl seem able to bring into the schools, like a smuggled drug, enough reality to remind the students about what is waiting out there, beyond the institutions's limits, for those stubborn enough to seek it out. And though I do not think that the schools can be changed by that activity in any permanent way, it is no doubt better for the

young than nothing at all, for they need good company so badly that it does not matter where or how they get it.

In the same way, even more importantly, the schools of thought I have described as existential and political do not seem to me opposed to one another. Both of them are attempts to restore to the young what has been taken from them. The simple fact is that the school works in two realms simultaneously, destroying at the same time the inner integrity of the psyche and the outer community of relation. Both areas are corroded, occupied, diminished. What happens is simply that the hold of institutions is established by the systematic destruction of all relation, public or private, that might give the individual a place to stand over and against the institution. The process is neither exclusively political nor existential. It is both; both the inner and outer worlds are affected. The result is a kind of doubled blindness, a doubled encapsulation, the loss of two kinds of potency: animal potency and political potency. The corrosion of each realm affects the other. The institutionalization of imagination and feeling creates a void in which the institution becomes all-powerful, thereby occupying the space that would ordinarily be filled by voluntary cooperation and association. And the institutionalization of association and community deprives the individual of felt connection, real human sustenance--a loss which is experienced inside as private, existential pain. The two realms and the two kinds of loss are so interdependent and intertwined that it is impossible to see

either of them simply or to grant either one more importance than the other.

At bottom then, the two views I have described are both necessary, for each of them is an incomplete response to an institutional process which is felt by the individual, the student, as a single condition, no matter how we break it down in the ways we analyze or respond to it. In the privacy of the psyche and the individual life our distinctions break down, melt back into a general experience, an undifferentiated feeling; the individual simply feels adrift and cut off, and it is that single condition, the pervasive weather of being, which makes most students so susceptible to the control of institutions. Where else, after all, can they find a place to belong?

I remember, years ago, when I taught college, how I was surprised at first by the states-of-mind of the students, most of whom seemed to have been so deprived of things, and so confused by that deprivation, that they could no longer think or feel clearly. I remember making notes for myself, trying to describe that condition, coming back again and again, unconsciously, to the metaphors I have used here:

> For my students, significance and meaning are always somewhere in the distance, somewhere in the future, located across immense valleys and mountains, and they could only reach them by slogging across time, trudging for years from class to class in the hope of earning admittance to what they have been taught is culture or society. There is far more to it than simply acquiring the skills and credentials necessary for a job. It has something to do with existence

itself, as if my students have been systematically bled of their own existence by institutions, and now must earn it back through obedience and service. They have in that sense been denied personhood, have been denied substance and depth for there is no substance to the person, no depth, except for what accumulates as experience--and is somehow received by the world itself, and it is precisely that reception which is missing in the schools. Some of us are lucky enough to find comrades and lovers who legitimize and ground what we are, but somehow our solidity as persons is always a battle between the receptivity of our friends and the denials of the institution: we are fed by one process and bled by the other. So my students are uncertain of themselves, contemporary versions of Eliot's hollow men and women, as if they have been turned inside and shaken out. Knowledge, meaning, information, discipline... It all comes from the outside, pouring in. The person has been sucked out and then buffeted by wave upon wave of demand and rhetoric--the great internal spaces of solitude and silence somehow broken and invaded and shrunk. What is left of the person seems invariably stiffened into a defensive posture and huddled protectively in some small cave of the soul, unwilling to come out.

They have been swindled into believing that the schools and society and knowledge are somehow identical--and they do not seem sufficiently convinced of their own intuitions, passions and strengths to make judgements about them or create alternatives to them. Many of them feel exactly about school the way young men do about the army. They are not in schools because they think they can find anything of use; they are there simply because they don't know what else to do. Life without institutional sanction and meaning has ceased to be life for them, for it is no longer possible for them to locate themselves in meaningful ways without having their existence legitimized by the structure of institutions. Simply put: they have been mesmerized at the deepest levels of imagination, then partially awakened--with only a dim memory of what it might feel like to define things for oneself, to feel meaning as a light and depth within the self.

And what is the alternative to that?

As I look through my notes I find this sentence: "I look up after class and see on the blackboard

only one word, the word dance;" ideally, all learning is a kind of dance--one in which we perceive the world anew in the gestures we make. I remember the first stanza in Yeats' poem, "Among School Children."

> The children learn to cipher and to sing.
> To study reading-books and histories,
> To cut and sew, be neat in everything
> In the best modern way --

And then, the last:

> Labour is blossoming or dancing where
> The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,
> Nor beauty born our of its own despair,
> Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.
> O chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,
> Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
> O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
> How can we know the dancer from the dance?

To cut and sew; The dancer and the dance. Those are the opposing ways open to us, and there is an immense distance between them. The institutional way is always cutting and sewing, patching together the segmented parts of a reality already destroyed by the institution itself. And in the other way, the way we have lost, the body is a dancer, moving to its own time and rhythm and steadily deepening, ripening; it is a process, and we are inseparable from the process of change, the steady evolution of identity. We are simply its furthest edge, a twist in life which perceives itself as "I" and moves forward naturally with the creaturely grace of change. Wisdom is really a gesture, the natural sap of being alive, the intelligent shape given to aliveness, and it is not separable from things, does not come from outside of us, cannot be taught or learned, but is simply in life, infusing when it is found whatever we say or do.

It is no accident that Yeats chooses a natural metaphor, that of the tree, to express it, because that world is the world of nature, the natural world, and it exists not only around but also inside of us as the inner direction of all organic life, a kind of natural ripening which moves us always toward immersion and participation in the world--

which is where and how knowledge begins. Our schools have never been the source of such knowledge, nor have they been the source of relation or ripening; those are rooted elsewhere; they seem almost coded in the flesh beyond all volition. What I meant to suggest in my notes was the nature of precisely the thing that the schools destroy: the felt connections which lie at the heart of all wisdom and which are by no means at odds with other kinds of knowing, but without which they become destructive, mere modes of separation and loss. What I mean is difficult to describe, and is perhaps nothing less than a felt love of the world, the kind of quiet grace that shows up in literature in the essays Camus wrote about the people of Oran, or in books like Giono's The Joy of Man's Desiring or Paustovsky's Story of a Life. Perhaps the most obvious examples I can think of appear in Tolstoy's work, and perhaps it is no accident that his ideas about education play a part in the history of free schools. The best examples I know occur in War and Peace: first, Prince Bolkonsky's discovery on the battlefield, as he stares into the sky that he is still alive, and then his reaction to the great oak blooming once again in the wood, late in the spring, after winter and apparent death. In each case, wisdom is not simply the function of revelation or experience, but of connection, almost an identification with the rhythms and cycles of nature, something at work both outside and inside of self, a habitation running deeper than individual thought or social role. So, too, in Anna Karenina, Levin comes closest to the

heart of life when he joins the peasants cutting grain. Lost in the heat and light and the muscular rhythms of his own body at work, hipdeep in the grain and in the company of comrades, he transcends all consciousness of self and draws from the world, as if through his pores, a wisdom waiting for him there, something already inside him but until then unrealized.

That is what I am talking about here: the lessons of relation. But I am not talking merely about relation to oneself or to a few others, what we call "personal" or "human" relations. That is only a part of human need. I mean, instead, the whole range of human relation and need: the natural creaturely appetite for civic, cultural and communal relation, for free association, for cooperation and community--the activities Kropotkin joined together under the heading of "mutual aid." Those too are needs so deeply rooted that they seem as instinctive and as biologically determined as any other appetite. Writing about the Athenian polis and the state, Hannah Arendt had this to say about the Greeks:

> ...the principal characteristic of the tyrant was that he deprived the citizen of access to the public realm, where he could show himself, see and be seen, hear and be heard, that he prohibited the agoreuein and politeuein, confined the citizens to the privacy of their households... According to the Greeks, to be banished to the privacy of household life was tantamount to being deprived of the specifically human potentialities of life...

The same thing is true of all of us, although we do not all know it. The denial of the social impulse--that is, the loss of self-determination, of a company of equals, of an

open world, of unmanaged experience--is not only a political experience; it is also a loss of nature, a denial of human nature, and it is felt, internally, as a loss of being, a loss of self.

What I mean to say, then, is that the restoration of relation means its restoration in all realms, in both the private and public worlds, and for that reason, the various schools of thought concerning radical educational innovation seem to me to express a common need. Each is an attempt to restore to human habitation a realm now occupied by the state; each of them is an attempt to enlarge both the person and the world. Someone like Jonothan means a change in consciousness, political power and social justice; for Paul Goodman it meant independent choice, the end to state domination, authenticity of behavior; for Sylvia Aston-Warner it means the reactivation of imagination; for Jim Herndon it means the ability to enter and accept the realities of day-to-day experience; for Ivan Illich it means an end to institutionalization and a return to what he elsewhere calls "conviviality," almost a Christian love. But whatever the alternatives or tactics suggested, the underlying aim remains the same: to release the possibilities of individual growth and human community, to re-occupy the realms now in the state's possession or excluded by the state's version of reality. And by "state" at this point I mean more than a system of government or a bureaucratic organization; I mean the entire cast of thought which is encouraged by institutions and which we have internalized

and projected upon all of reality: the ways in which the world, in our minds, has ceased to be an open, living realm.

The Greeks that Hannah Arendt described also had a state, but theirs (in both senses still), at least for a short while, was unlike ours. For a few generations (leaving aside the question of who belonged to the polity), all those who belonged to the polity felt themselves to be free, equal, and responsible. No one was over them, and their world, far more than ours, was a "horizontal" one, opening out. They had no bureaucracy, no fixed corps of higher officials, no hierarchy. The state was identical with those who composed it, was a community of persons, not an abstract entity or overarching myth. They chose their officials by lot, regardless of age or experience, assuming that all were capable of governing and had the right to do it. Decisions were collective, made in meetings open to all. Public life was understood as the natural right, and what learning meant to them was "participation" in it; the entire polis and city were understood to be educational; one learned by doing, by being in the world.

It did not last long, of course; nor did it apply to all persons; women, slaves, and tradesmen were excluded. But I use it here only as an example of a moment in history in which, for a while, the screen and dream of empire did not come between persons and their comrades or the world. One can think of many other examples, ranging from the Bushmen and Pygmy tribes and their immersion in the world of nature (the

only Pygmy God is the forest itself; the Bushmen listen to the stars) to those rare moments in more "civilized" nations in which the world opens up and out: a short period in the French Revolution, the first few years of the American republic, the period in Barcelona described by Orwell in Homage to Catalonia, a few months in Mexico in 1911 when the Zapatistas had taken Morelos and were running it communally. I mention those almost at random, and there are many others of course, and most of those are not "historical" or earth-shaking; many of them are domestic, private, as simple as lovemaking or even meditation, all of them moments in which life moves us past all control (all hierarchical control) and into another relation to things, which means, in a sense, another world.

Such moments do not teach us how to change the schools, because the schools are beyond real change. They will not tell us how to do away with schools or what to do instead of using them, for not enough people can yet imagine life without them to move past them in any widespread way. And yet it is because of that fact, not in spite of it, that such moments are important. They remind us about what is possible; in the midst of occupied territory they clear at least a small space, sometimes through action, sometimes in the mind. I will try to put it as succinctly as I can. At this point in time the power of institutions can only be diminished by imaginative thought or action, but the sources of such thought or action cannot be found in pedagogy or pedagogical reform. One must

find them instead in experience itself, outside pedagogy, in what I have called "the world." But that means that one must be devoted enough to the world, must love it enough, to move towards it, to move past institutional limits in order to enter it, and that too is what I meant at the beginning of this piece by "freedom."

A few final notes.

The preceding paper was written in part for another occasion. Because of that, the following notes, though they may seem to restate what has already been said, may say it more clearly or richly.

I believe that most of our disagreements about pedagogy and the schools are really disagreements about larger but hidden sugjects: the nature of the state, the nature of authority, the nature of human nature, the ideal or possible relations between the person, community, society and state. What bothers me is that the "great debate" underlying our lesser ones is rarely spoken in terms equal to its importance; instead it is encoded in the rhetoric of education in such a way that we lose almost all consciousness of it. And I feel that it is important, always, to move past the rhetoric of education and the limits it imposes on us and to speak about the schools in terms of our larger concerns.

In those terms, I have what might be called an anarchist's view of the schools: anti-statist, anti-bureaucratic, anti-institutional, anti-hierarchical. As I understand it, the natural direction of human growth is toward a complicated net-

work of association, connection and community, and that growth is more often than not impeded by the state and its institutions. That interference is not accidental. The state (and especially the large modern nation-states) are built invariably at the expense of organic relation -- not merely because they supplant them, but because the state itself is literally constructed (both in activity and imagination) with and from the force of emotion and belief and will (what the Freudians call "libido") which would otherwise be the connective bridge between persons and others, persons and the world. It is as if the impulse toward connection is either monopolized and destroyed institutionally in a process not unlike Lorenz's experiments with animal imprinting; institutional relations, inorganic objects, take the place of organic connections, persons.

The point is simply that it is not in the state's interests to see the relation between person and world deepened, or the imagination set free, or the will strengthened, or the soul en-couraged, or the flesh deepened in tenderness -- all of which would be the results of any decent education. Schools are not the places where such things take place. And that is not merely because most people in schools do not have such ends in mind (though they don't); it is because that schools, as a form, as an activity, are an expression of a view of the world, a kind of consciousness, at odds with the processes I have named. I am not even sure whether the schools as a form are simply part of the way (in Marxist and political terms) one class, through the state, suppresses all others; or whether (in analytic, Freudian

or Reichian terms) the schools are simply part of a slant of culture so deeply coded in the ways we think and act, so much at odds with felt life, that they exist always at its expense; or whether (in anarchist terms, or the terms of someone like Lewis Mumford), the institutions of empire are always designed to extend empire and therefore reproduce its shape without fail.

Writing about schools, William Godwin, perhaps the first anarchist theoretician, said:

> The project of a national education ought uniformly to be discouraged on account of its obvious alliance with national government. This is an alliance of a more formidable nature than the old and much contested alliance of church and state. Before we put so powerful a machine under the direction of so ambiguous an agent, it behooves us to consider well what it is that we do. Government will not fail to employ it to strengthen its hands and perpetuate its institutions. If we could even suppose the agents of government not to propose to themselves an object which will be apt to appear in their eyes not merely innocent but meritorious, the evil would not the less happen. Their view as institutors of a system of education will not fail to be analagous to their views in their political capacity; the data on which their conduct as statemen is vindicated will be the data upon which their instructions are founded. It is not true that our youth ought to be instructed to venerate the commonwealth, however excellent; they should be instructed to venerate truth, and the constitution only so far as it corresponded with their independent deductions of truth. Had the scheme of a national education been adopted when despotism was most triumphant, it is not to be believed that it could have for ever stifled the voice of truth. But it would have been the most formidable and profound contrivance for that purpose that imagination can suggest. Still, in the countries where liberty chiefly prevails, it is reasonably to be assumed that there are important errors, and a national education has the most direct tendency to perpetuate those errors and to form all minds upon one model.

What I am saying here is pretty much the same thing. It is, if I am not mistaken, an attitude imbedded in a tradition

which runs back through politics to the Reformation, back through the Quakers, Anabaptists, Diggers -- the eccentric sects that insisted in different ways on individual responsibility expressed in communal ways and free of hierarchical authority. That insistence -- which I take to be the expression of a human need and appetite, of human health -- becomes, later in history, the political and social movements of the nineteenth century which called into question the state and its centralized political authority instead of the church's spiritual power. But whatever the context, whatever hierarchy was challenged, what was called into question was what we ought to call into question now: the dominion of the state, the power of the collective, the uses of authority, the rigidity of bureaucratic organization, the effects of institutionalization on relation ahd imagination, the value of a shared consciousness so deeply enclosed by the ideas of property, profit, commerce and competitive zeal.

Those questions, raised again and again in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, are with us still, but we seem to voice them less and less clearly -- or, rather, we seem too defeated to voice them politically on any large scale, or economically, and so we reduce them to arguments about pedagogy, as if hoping to do, through and in the schools, what we cannot do as inhabitants of a larger world. And beyond all that, we seem to have lost the ability to believe in certain ideas that existed well into the century: in the possibility of alternative forms of social, economic organization; in the end of the

centralized state and its powers; in the assumption of individual, communal and equalized responsibility for things. Instead of all that, we seem caught for the moment in the false duality of individual and collective (or institutional) value. Wherever I go to talk, when one talks about stepping outside of institutional values, people invariably say, "oh, ah, you mean, selfishness, doing things just for oneself." What has been lost is the middleground, the middle distance, what I would call the "world of relation,": that is, the realm of connection, community, association, <u>society</u> -- the world of relation contained in the flesh, in impulse and appetite, not enforced by or organized into the state, but lived out into the world naturally, voluntarily.

Were we to begin with that middleground and the hope of occupying it some day, somehow, we would find the schools we have useless for our purposes. What would take their place is not yet clear, has never been satisfying imagined, but that is because such things cannot be imagined but must be lived out experimentally -- and that process will begin (if ever) in earnest only when we are willing to let go, in our minds, of the beliefs about schools put there, through the schools, by the state.

What I mean, then, is no different from the attitude Marx held at various points about the Paris Commune; he thought it a mistake to assume that the rebels could make decent use of the state apparatus <u>as it stood</u>; it was better to dissolve and replace it precisely because of the ways in which certain values

and relations were so deeply contained in them as forms that they could not be avoided if the apparatus remained intact. In the same way, but much later, and in another realm, Reich claimed in his work on character armor and structure that various kinds of change could not take place within certain structures of personality unless those structures were dissolved; and he extended that perception to include various social or institutional structures. So, on this point, political and therapeutic theory converge: certain kinds of structure are understood to be so fundamentally expressive of a particular world-view that one can do nothing, through those structures, to change the structures themselves.

That, in short, is what I believe about the schools. But when I talk about moving beyond their limits I am not envisioning a stepping aside or a retreat from the world of others or the social world. I am talking instead about a belated entry into that world, the social world, for it is at the edges of institutions that that world begins; it is there that real action and thought become possible. That does not mean refusing to work in or with public schools (though that idea may often make sense), but it does mean that whatever work one does there has got (1) to be grounded in a sense of the world and human nature running deeper than almost anything offered us by pedagogy, and (2) to be directed at ends more humane, free and imaginative than anything possible in the schools. I mean: our acceptance of the state's institutional definition of reality or possibility has got to end. We ought not to accept without

question the idea that the schools are the only way or the best way or even the inevitable way that education can take place. Or willingness to do that, to accept that idea, is not a measure of our reason or responsibility; it is, more often, merely a measure of the ways the schools have diminished what we believe possible, or what we can imagine. In short, lacking a felt world, a world of relation, an unmanaged world, we have rarely tasted (or trusted) the great gifts and power of natural community, equality or freedom, and so we are inclined to settle for much less than we ought to, to accept much less than we really need.

The schools, then, as I see them, are themselves a result of what we have lost, and to accept them is to accept that loss as final -- and we ought not to accept it at all.

Educational Alternatives - Something Between Despair And Pollyanna

by Arthur Pearl

Any discussion of alternatives to education must take into account three quite distinct aspects of change and these are: (1) goals, (2) educational tactics (methods or processes) and, (3) organizational structure. Only after all of these are clearly specified is it possible to discuss meaningfully the "experts" or leaders that will be needed, how they could be trained (or educated) and whether these leaders have to be "elitist". Today we are bogged down in piecemeal analysis and prescriptions which further defeatist feelings and/or hokey nostrums.

Real educational change begins with specification of goals. This is doubly difficult because if the aim is to develop an education that will be a force for a different society then the altered society must also be described in detail and its desirability defended. Here where education reformers don't founder, they flounder. Educational goals tend to fall into three camps. The traditionalists, the humanists, the agents of social change. The traditionalists try to prepare students to fit into the society as it is. The only changes they propose are technical improvements. The "humanists" are child oriented and try to generate sanctuaries for children made comfortable by warm and supportive adults and a plethora of resources, open-classroom and free schools with little attention to social settings or logical consequences (the ideal "humanist" school would look much

like a well-furnished zoo). The third group educates persons to change society. It is this last group that I wish to speak for.

The society I desire in its ideal epitomizes freedom. This freedom must be manifest in every area of life -- in work (and other economic activity), in politics, in culture, in leisure pursuit and in development of intra- and interpersonal relations. Freedom in each of these arenas means choice and gratification. In a free society individuals have real choice of work, participate in policy making, can express themselves in languages of choice, can have fun in many sanctioned ways and can experiment with a range of different setups. In the expression of these choices a free person gains security, comfort, a sense of group identity, a feeling of usefulness, a sense of competence, optimism and excitement. That kind of world is markedly different from the one which currently frustrates and overwhelms us.

Our current work world is not in any way free. Very few people have choice. A very large number of persons are denied opportunities to work at all in the United States. Five million of these are categorized as unemployed. Another 55 million adults (persons over age of 16) are out of the labor force. These persons are too old, too young, insufficiently educated, handicapped or women. The working people aren't free either. Many of them were compelled to take the job they hold under the threat of even greater unhappiness. They derive meager gratification from their expenditure of energy. The HEW report:

Work in America, depicted a work force beset with feelings of insecurity, the pain of boredom, little camaraderie, little pride in quality of work, no sense of utility, little feeling that change was imminent, and dreariness. That tells only a part of the story. The distribution of jobs is unjust. Jobs that pay the most money, influence social policy, are most socially-prized and are just better (cleaner, easier, safer and more comfortable) go disproportionately to white males from economically advantaged backgrounds. These desirable jobs are offered on the basis of credentials, the successful completion of which take many many years of formal education. School success becomes the primary basis for determining who shall be allowed a good job. There is no way education can avoid responsibility for the unequitable distribution of wealth which prevails in the United States. At the present time rather than owning up, large numbers of "schools" officials spend their time justifying the credentialing process by conjuring up theories of inequality which postulate that various poor people cannot expect to go far in education because of their disabilities (e.g. Arthur Jensen: - genetic influence; Mc V. Hunt - inadequate intellectual stimulation; D.P. Moynihan - inadequate socialization and Oscar Lewis - cultural deprivation). Some "scholars" argue that unemployment is necessary for a non-inflationary economy and others devise gadgets which eliminate workers. The issue before us, is whether education can do something about work by analyzing the current situation, proposing change and implementing tactics and stratiegies to bring new ideas into

reality. That is one form of educational change I propose. The how and who of it I come to later.

We can similarly address our political life. Persons from almost all walks of life openly lament their powerlessness. At every level cynicism has replaced commitment. Children learn that our democracy is checked and balanced by three branches - a legislative, executive, and executive (to which they respond sotto voce - "all equally corrupt"). They have little historical perspective and are willing thus to throw away the significant but limited gains in participatory government because of the continued and, in some instances, newly developed imperfections. Government role, its necessary control and its limitations are never treated in depth. The student's responsibility to rectify injustice and the critical importance of individual rights are treated superficially or grossly distorted. The present seems overwhelming; the future is beyond comprehension. Politics reduced to meaningless ritual - yoga, violent rhetoric, (and sometimes violent action), organic gardening, graffiti, and commitment to eastern religion! Or nothing. A true education picks up from that and develops and updates theories of alienation, shows how these apply and again proposes ways out. In politics, education has more latitude than is the case with economics. Every class can be a microcosm, an experiment in freedom. Student's rights can be ensured as well as variations on the theme of governance. These models can be related to larger systems; and thus are subjects for class discussion. In those discussions the energy for change can be identified and procedures for mobilization considered. (I shall

return to these subjects later).

Pluralism in a society must extend beyond general discussions of work and politics. Pluralism is more than opening up achromatic economic and political systems. Pluralism is coalitions that truly reflect the language and the aspirations of different groups. Good education in work and politics changes understandings and activities; however, humans live by more than bread and power alone and the mass and mono-culturalism of the school must also be described, dissected and replaced. -- This begins with the language of the school. The school's language contributes significantly to denial of freedom. The language is restrictive, inhibiting choice, reinforcing the oppressive power of the teacher and forcing children to renounce home, history, and neighborhood. The spoken word is not the only restriction; writing and reading is also bereft of choice and gratification. Both forms of communication are rule-ridden, tedious and limited in range. In school, writing is a tedious exercise, often devoid of meaning, and reading is banality. Of the many fraudulent issues raised in education of young children probably the most pernicious is one that is reduced to the phrase - "why Johnny can't read". Pure guano. The truth is that the stuff school's offer Johnny to read isn't worth the effort. Schools offer a more insipid fare than children discover through natural curiousity and children's natural curiousity is highly overrated. Children's curiousity is likely to be a retreat from rather than an advance to freedom. Freedom doesn't come either cheap or easy. A great

many people will flee freedom as Erich Fromm illustrates in his Escape from Freedom. No form of school communication abets freedom.

The school will generate language consistent with freedom when experimentation is encouraged, when students are encouraged to be polygot, not merely in languages which have attained official recognition but also in the transient codes that are part of dynamic societies. When schools recognize that oppressed people (which all adolescents are) must develop secret languages and accept that as a reality without going through the ugly charade of pretending to be part of the network or trying to impossible task of outlawing all non-approved languages then schools can move toward cultural pluralism. With history, the aim must be to debate different interpretations where all interpretations have equal access to podium and microphone. The schools must become accessible expressions of all ethnic and national groups.

Leisure in a free society is participation. Freedom is denied when persons are coerced or persuaded to take on passive recipient roles such as T.V. watching, and other packaged entertainment. Restrictions are imposed by law and by land-use regulation. But the most destructive restriction of all is the failure of education. Education as it exists reinforces passivity. What is needed is imaginative leadership that helps conceptualize and develop models that would offer ways out of idleness and emptiness.

And lastly, schooling must free people psychologically.

Children must be able to grow in such a way that an individual is able to obtain gratification while not inhibiting the gratification of others. Obviously we are a far cry from such a goal and it becomes increasingly clear that technological progress does not bring psychological stability. The answer lies not in such gross anti-intellectual perversions as TV or yoga, but in true analysis, theory development and applications of theory in spaces where the widest ranges of human beings live -- suburbs, ghettos, senior citizen settlements and public schools. Given the interdependence of the world, such efforts cannot be conducted in isolation with segregated populations, regardless of the mechanisms of segregation. Whether it is the desperate effort to flee problems which was reflected by the flight to suburbs by middle-income whites immediately after World War II, or the communes and "free-schools" of the children of those who ran to suburbs, the result is psychological stagnation. Psychological freedom cannot be attained by running from ugliness and oppressiveness, but by overcoming them.

All of the aspects of freedom are inter-related. It is inconceivable to discuss personal freedom without political, economic and cultural freedom. It is also becoming increasingly evident that freedom must be universally attained if it is to exist at all. Freedom as an attribute for selected elites is insufficient (e.g.-the freedom of white males who owned property that was gained in the Revolutionary War of the Colonies in the 18th Century) but even limited freedom for a few serves to raise the consciousness and the desire of everybody. In mass society demand for freedom becomes increasingly

strident and the notion that one person's freedom comes through the exploitation of others becomes increasingly more difficult to maintain politically or conceptually. The very real danger is that in the absence of leadership and education for universal freedom we may find ourselves with no freedom at all. The cynicism of the wealthy coupled with the desperation of the poor could produce deterioration in thought and interaction. Evidence of such corruption greets us everywhere we turn.

A Brief Digression: - The feasibility of true educational reform or; "when boots are trumps who has the biggest shoes"?

Any debate about educational reform must deal with feasibility. Is reform possible? Ultimately, educational change reduces to politics. Where are the potential constituencies, the energies, the forces to produce change? Educational change clearly is influenced by ideology (even though some of our more renowned scholars insist ideology has been eliminated by the same exciting progressive forces which made us immune from small pox). The excitement about trivial tinkering at education's peripheries - open classrooms, games, simulation, new gadgetry and the like -- is a direct result of widespread conviction that more significant change is impossible. And once large numbers of persons are thoroughly convinced that change is impossible, attempts to produce change are obviously undermined. The threat to true educational reform comes not from the conservatives, whose atavistic mutterings lose vitality daily,

but rather from persons who would call themselves radicals but who actually serve unwittingly as agents, fifth columnists, for true conservativism. The threats to change come from persons who insist that significant institutional change is not possible or that wide-sweeping institutional changes are currently on the drawing board and that we shouldn't mess around and louse up the good things that our leaders have planned for us. Both claims are issued as scientific pronouncements with the hope that the paucity of thought will be disguised by the impressiveness of credentials and rhetoric.

Daniel Ellsberg has described the war in Vietnam as Harvard's War. Well, all wars against freedom turn out to be Harvard's wars. In those impressive citadels of Cambridge Daniel Patrick Moynihan generated the following wonderfully liberating gems as: (1) that limitations on freedom of blacks stemmed from the destruction of the black male way back then (which deflected attention away from current institutional injustices of the here and now), (2) that the best way to deal with poor people was to forget about them (benign neglect), and (3) that if liberals would stop maliciously attacking poor, decent and forward-looking Richard M. Nixon he, in his gratitude, would give to us a guaranteed annual income.

But it doesn't stop there. The Harvard Educational Review resurrected the notion of black inferiority and in and influential series of articles played out that theme along several destructive lines in which the basic argument reduces to near unanimous agreement that indeed blacks and other non-

whites are inferior, but the nature of that inferiority needs to be determined -- is it genetic (as Arthur Jensen suggests) or insufficient cognitive stimulation in early childhood, (J. Mc V. Hunt) or chaotic socialization (Moynihan again) or deprived culture (Oscar Lewis)? It was as if a curve of a freeway was placed right next to a house and one day a runaway truck ran through a house and over some sleeping people and the wise men of Chelm, now fully credentialed and tenured, explained that the accident was caused by the disabilities of the victims, ("It was their heads", said one, "They just wasn't smart enough to get away". "No", said the second, "it was their hearts, they were petrified with fear". "Wrong", said the third, "it was their legs, they were too slow". "Now, between the three of us we have given you every possible explanation" they concluded).

Christopher Jencks followed up this line in his work Inequality, which after presenting data that schools have failed to alter the economic status of poor people (a dimension of freedom) concluded that schools should stop trying and that instead we should redistribute income. In his work he treats neither the fact that almost all efforts to improve the schooling of poor children were forms of remediation based on one or more deficits that the poor are alleged to have (see above) nor does he tell how we will achieve income redistribution in the absence of an education. Daniel Bell, yet another Harvadite and promoter of the 'end of ideology' suggests that in the future, a meritocracy of deserving elites will emerge and the

group, because of their wisdom and benignity, will create so much abundance that everybody will have all they want.

Enough. The point is that these and similar announcements are offered as scientific analysis. They are not. There is no science in them. At best the conclusions are based on extrapolations from data that are only tangentially relevant to the questions of the potentiality of change. The analysts tend to be remote from the scene, and are incapable of identifying programs of merit. To argue that schools are incapable of producing change because schools of the past did not, is the same kind of sound reasoning that contends that nothing can happen for the first time. But the statement is worse than that, it reflects not only bad sociology, it is also bad history. Obviously, schools will always be of the times, affected by, influenced by AND influencing the social scene. In those schools there will be some people trying desperately to hold back the flow of history, others will blissfully go only with the action (whatever it is) while a few will be out front helping in the formulation of new concepts and policies. In a society where schooling is relatively unimportant to the many dimensions of freedom - where schooling has little to do with work, politics, culture, leisure or personal life, it follows that school change or lack of it will effect people's lives minimally. In a society where credentials determine work station and where the size and shape of the work force is determined by the lack of public understanding of the arcane phrases of economicists who establish policies that influence us all (fiscal policies,

monetary policies, manpower policies, transfer policies, transfer payment policies, multiplier effects policies, policies guided by the Phillips relation, etc -- look out here comes Harvard's runaway truck again), where politics is complicated and the facts are hard to find and even harder to interpret, where the only real alternative to mass media for cultural development are the schools, the school grows as a potential influence in the process of change.

When teachers are scattered and disorganized their obvious weakness can be exploited. When teachers become concentrated and organized their strength is a potential force for change. When school is of secondary importance to youth, when only a few adults go to school, when students are scattered and disorganized, their weakness to influence change is apparent, but when school becomes critical to youth (by recognition of its current irrelevance) when adults in the millions attend school, when students are concentrated and organized, their potential as influences of change should be equally apparent. It is no accident that when both teachers and students gain in strength, there appear official declarations that changes in schools are impossible.

Because of the challengeable assumptions, including research of a kind which is not challenged, because of the questionable data, because of the remoteness of the researcher, because of the unfamiliarity of the researcher about the nuances of life styles, and competences of the persons studies -- that which emerges as reports and books are non scientific

pronouncements, rather they are religious tracts which in some instances have the power of papal encyclicals.

The cause of change has been harmed by the inflexibility of "left" thinking. Analysis is often bound to social systems which have ceased to exist and there appears to be an inability to translate concerns into the changed system. The notion of "inevitability" persists. Thus there remain expectations that contradictions of capitalism will lead to ever deepening depressions and that the organized strengths of the industrial worker will spearhead significant reforms if not actual revolution. This thinking was based on the situation of developing industrialism. Society then was centripetal, industries were surrounded by residents. The companies were relatively small and work was labor intensive. "Non-working" populations (children, women, the elderly) were physically tied to the homes of the worker. Communities were essentually limited to two classes - a very large working class and a quite small property (or employer) class. In such a situation the working class, if well organized had the knowledge to run the system and also had the potential power to take over the society. Goven that situation, the working class had access to means of public education that could bypass schools, Schools were places that working people sent their children to improve them. They were not places where children learned to change society.

In the last hundred hears much has changed. Now societies

are highly centrifugal, people live away from each other and miles away from work. The work is capital intensive, which interferes with camaraderie on the job. The economies of work are complicated - as is the bureaucratic organization. A technological society is a many-class society. It is also a mass-culture society. Persons from all walks of life are lulled by the same television programs. Various classes of the society have gained a measure of economic security through protectionist organization (unions, professional associations, etc.). These operate selfishly and independently of each other. Non-working persons more and more are the responsibility of impersonal bureaucracies (schools, rest homes, bridge clubs, health spas, etc.). Work is specialized and credentialed. Decisions are made in executive sessions by experts who own the secrets that are required for decision-making. The size of non-working populations have grown; mechanisms of economic balancing have evolved which act as gyroscopes against huge economic displacements like depressions; consumer credit ties people to possessions and conservatizes them; government employment reduces the impact of imbalance in the marketplace, as does government subsidy, purchasing and licensing. Contradictions in the society remain and in some instances are clearly deepening, but these contradictions take different forms that are not recognized by classical left thinkers -- energy crises, pollution, overcrowding, "senseless" violence, drug use, wholesale political corruption, wars that reach no conclusion, a loss of national purpose and direction. The contradictions of a technical society are most often manifest

with signs of depletion, produce the hollow man T.S. Eliot insists don't revolt as the world ends, they merely whimper. The loss of energy produces frustration and acts of terror on the part of small bands of "revolutionaries" who because they have means to talk to people, but no facility for listening, insist they talk for them, thus disrupting even more potential alliances.

The force for change in developing industrialism was clearly the producer -- who because of numbers and strategic situation could take over society. Producers of manufactured goods have declined, and have been replaced by professionals and other credentialed persons . Their organizations have generated dissatisfaction among consumers. The force for change in a technical society cannot be the declining proletarian who is ageing, decreasing in numbers and in vitality. The force for change must come from the non-working classses, and the consumers. To be a force this group must gain a consensus on clearly articulated proposals which offer something to each disparate group (including something to the segment of unionized workers who are frustrated and want change). The tactics and strategy for change in a technical society are complex and require a well-educated constituency. Change in a technical society is macro-political affair and requires intensive and extensive planning. It is not a simple matter of demanding "pay raise, a grievance system and advancement on the basis of seniority or we hit the bricks" - as it was in the good old days. Not it is a set of demands that tie

diverse people together because the proposed suggested changes in taxes, employment, environmental impact, governance are all sufficiently well thought out and articulated so that it can be logically established that the vast majority of people will benefit by the proposal. This, obviously, that will be determined by the people themselves. (one devastating aspect of an elitist technological society is that experts know what's best for others -- thus "experts" devised a poverty program for people that would remedy their deficits and when poor people were unenthusiastic about the plan, this was all the proof the experts needed to demonstrate how really inferior the poor were).

There is no way that change can take place in a technological society without the involvement of schools, the basis of understanding that is required demands a well-educated populace. Mass media oversimplify issues, elitist media exclude the masses, consumer organizations are too limited in scope to educate and also don't have reserves to build a solid foundation of understanding (they also tend to be elitist-led). A revitalized school is an absolute necessity for change in our society.

TO SUM IT UP

It is nonsensical to argue that schools in and of themselves can change the world and I don't believe any serious social

analyst advocates a renaissance of children crusades.

It is equally absurd to argue that the millions of persons involved in schools (students, teachers and parents) do not constitute a potentially powerful political force that could, in this dynamic of institutional change, play a crucial role. Of course the concerns of the greater society would crunch down on advocates of school change, but the reverse is also true.

In the centrifugal society schools become one of the few hubs a community has ---it's either meet there or in a bar.

THE WHAT AND HOW OF SCHOOL CHANGE

The effective change agent in a school is not some wild-eyed radical spewing revolutionary slogans, which I fear is the image many people have of school-based change agents (and perhaps images some people have of themselves). A change agent in the school is basically a demystifier and a sharer of visions. A change agent in school analyzes society, suggests improvements, defends the desirability of such improvement, illustrates the feasibility of the proposal, economically (who and how would pay for it), politically (who would gain from it), psychologically (within our capabilities) and ecologically (doesn't deplete finite resources); and makes concrete recommendations of tactics and strategy (most importantly he or she suggests

where to begin); the school based change agent is a model of a person who owns his or her experience and as such is involved in raising the consciousness of students, parents, co-workers, elected officials, etc.

The school based change agent is involved with education about work, politics and culture.

Some suggestions about change in education about work:

Schools in a technological society assign people to different work stations. This is their major function - they attempt to produce just enough credentials to keep the system from overbalancing. In the allocation of credentials schools maintain historical bias, race, class and sex discrimination and develop theories and facts to defend the actions taken. This is done non-reflectively. A change agent demystifies the process, in that process, by explaining how credentialing works; the change agent acts to encourage underclass children to believe that esteemed professions are within their potentiality and to assist children (especially girls, non-whites and impoverished children) to work out life strategies to maximize the attaining of a credential. But that obviously is not enough. The student must not only be prepared to enter the work world as it is but also must be prepared to change it. The student must be aware of different ways that employment can be created, the impact of current tax policies, what changes

could be made, how those changes are made, the impact of wage policies, how those are made, the mechanisms of labor force exclusion, etc.

A very necessary learning in this continuing discussion is the manipulation of large numbers: the distinction between millions, billions, and trillions. Most macro-economics abominations suggested by the president and other ignoramii go unchallenged because the numbers used are incomprehensible to most people. Thus a proposal for a 10 billion dollar increase in military budget can go slipping by unchallenged and a 10 million increase in old age assistance appear to be perfectly clear evidence of solid support of our senior citizens. One way students can learn the difference between huge numbers is to translate these numbers into life experience. Thus for example I presented the following problem to a group of low income San Jose eighth graders. If an inch was a dollar how far would you have to walk to use up the military budget of 85 billion dollars? (Answer: since there are 63,360 inches in a mile the trip would be 1.342 million miles. To get an idea of how far out that is - it is five trips to the moon (when it is farthest from the earth) -- with 80 thousand miles left over -- which amounts to 3 trips around the world and enough left over for a leisurely walk to New York and back again.)

Another crucial set of student learning is the concept of zero sum -- which means if some people have more than their share then others must have less. To get this point across

I have designed the impossible game -- it goes like this:

Thirteen jobs are available, 4 are low paying, 5 are moderate paying (skilled labor, sales, non-prestiged professions) and 4 are high paying (managerial and esteemed professionals), 20 people differing in age, sex, race and education are applicants. Assign and defend people to different jobs. It is interesting to note that when young children play the game they assign people according to established norms, whereas, graduate students in education don't like the game and try to disqualify some of the applicants (knowing of course what is best for them).

After this phase I ask students to devise a game where all people can work -- if they change the total amount of money that is available for wages I ask them to tell me where they got it from. If they redistribute the total money that is in the game -- (a $120,000 year executive can, if reduced to $40,000 a year, generate 8 jobs at $10,000 a year) how are they going to bring this redistribution about?[7]

Finally I bring the game into a reality context by analyzing with the students proposed employment legislation and suggest ways that this learning can be shared with parents, other students, elected officials, etc.

This change in curriculum can be included in math, social studies, and English lessons. There will be some furor, some parents will insist their children are too young, some children

will weary of all this stuff, some administrators will object that required materials are being given short shrift -- but all of these are battles that can be won and in the process of winning them, students learn even more about the political process.

Some suggestions about change in education about citizenship.

Schools have the responsibility to produce good citizens -- most teachers just don't know what one of them things would look like. Two things must be learned in school --one is appreciation of rights, the other is how to function in participatory decision-making. If these learnings are to be a part of social change then students must relate what they learn in school to outside political happenings.

To learn about rights, students must have opportunity to practice them. Every classroom can establish basic rights which would include (1) the right to express unpopular beliefs in speech, press and symbolically in dress, (2) the right of privacy -- certain areas of the classroom (lockers) would be the students' and not subject to trespass, also rights to not express oneself would be respected, (3) the right of due process -- presumptions of innocence, counsel, trial by peers, appeal to independent tribunal. A fourth right should be discussed -- the right not to be a captive audience and what changes would have to be made if such a right were to be incorporated in a public school (vouchers, end to compulsary education, etc.).

In living with rights, students learn both their importance and the problems of implementation. The teacher's role as model is crucial. The teacher either inspires a belief in the importance of rights or the teacher furthers the cause of cynicism.

Students should set up participatory government. At every level of school students must participate in group decision-making and learn about the processes and consequences of political decision-making. The give and take, the distinction between legitimate compromise and sell-out, the impact of self-interest groups are all required learning and the classroom is a place to learn them.

Contrasting school governance with local, state and national governance and inspiring children to propose constitutional amendments and legislation, as well as debating issues with elected officials, are necessary parts of integrated program of political development.

One can expect the same kind of opposition perhaps slightly more anxiously active that one encountered in education about work. How the teacher deals with that opposition is a form of education, how a constituency is developed upon what issues a teacher stands, when a retreat strategy is employed -- all if effectively illustrated and discussed enable students to overcome

feelings of helplessness and inadequacy.

Political education must engender feelings of accountability for societal functioning. A student must learn that freedom isn't free. A capricious vote can have terrible consequences. A voting population that doesn't know what it is doing is far more dangerous than an equal number of 6 year olds behind the steering wheels of runaway trucks.

Shouldn't everybody who voted for Richard Nixon be sent to prison for accessories to crimes?

Bilingual and Multi-cultural Education

A good political and economic education is in itself multi-lingual and multi-cultural. Cultural, in that it is the composite of all the workings of an interdependent group of people. The language of occupations are constantly changing, reflecting the nature of the work and the people involved. The issues of politics also reflect the ethnic and class composition of leaders. However, true pluralism would transcend work and politics. Approaches to different languages, histories, customs, aesthetics must be part of a school program. The emphasis of such programs must be in changing attitudes that keep specific groups in less than equal status. In the United States that means blacks, Chicanos, native Americans, Asian-Americans (and of course women).

A bilingual and multi-cultural education has two main thrusts. One, it enourages oppressed minority children to feel at home in school (gratifies needs of security, comfort, and belonging, usefulness, competence, hope and excitement) -- and two, it rectifies misconceptions that the other students have about these minorities.

Bilingualism must serve both factions if it is to serve either. Instituting a bi-lingual progra in a hostile environment and not dealing with the opposition ("why should they be treated special?." -- "they live in America, let them speak American," -- "How come we don't have a Greek language program?-- "Why are we wasting good money on them when the money could be used for a new school program, or PE, or band"). At best such a program deteriorates into ESL (English as a Second Language) which bridges the foreign-language speaking into English, and then insists upon English; at worst, bi-lingualism provokes antagonism and even violence. The case must be made that the English-speaking population has much to gain from the second language - immediate in the interactions with valued companions and as part of this political, economic, cultural, leisure time and personal future. The failure to make that case prejudices a bi-lingual program, reducing it to a spoiled image program, and fails to capture the imaginations for any period of time of the students who are to be helped. Bi-lingual programs are often burdened with technology. The languages are strangulated

by a new breed of crypto-linguists - far more interested in developing rigid sequential programs than they are in studying language in a free and open settings. An overly technical bi-lingual program restricts students by first - limiting behavior and then making a static language. Oppressed youths generate their own language. The Spanish spoken by teenagers in San Jose, is far different than the Spanish spoken by their parents which differs again from the Spanish of Mexico City or Madrid.

It is a sad fact that many bi-lingual programs are run on the same principles of restriction that their existence was supposed to correct.

One phase of multi-culturalism in an institution is often minority history. Too often this history emulates official history by glorifying historical figures. As such it is educationally worthless. No student needs a highly varnished history. Students need perspective and orientation. History, if debated, can provide that. Every student must become a historian. They must become proficient in oral history.

A group of students at Adams High School in Portland attempted to chronicle the history of the black in Portland. They interviewed figures who participated in significant events --- civil rights struggles, police citizen confrontations, desegregation conflicts, they learned what jobs attracted blacks initially (railroads, essentially, then shipyards and other

military work). They supplemented their data gathering with search of the literatures (mostly newspapers, but also to one Ph.D. dissertation on the subject) and added to the depth of presentation with photographs of persons and places described in the text. Their work was exhibited at the Oregon Historical Association who awarded them a grant to complete the job. Finished, theirs will be the most definitive effort at such a history. Such projects are possible everywhere and change students' understanding of what is history and the appreciation of its importance.

The Organization of Schools

Schools must be decentralized. The bumbling and deceptive efforts in recent years in that direction reflect the growing recognition of this truth. Decentralization of schools however can be achieved only when placed in a goal context. Too much of the argument for decentralization has been decentralization for decentralization's sake. This can lead to nowhere. The schools described above can function best with faculties of no more than 20, student bodies of no more than 400. Each school would have its own policy board and district offices would provide resources (which need to be shared) and other services (ordered and contracted by the local school). As the purposes and practices of schools become more specified, the necessity of decentralization will become more clear. It will not happen the other way around.

The Training of the Leaders

Leaders in a free society are NOT trained they are educated: They are educated in the process that Friere describes in Pedagogy of the Oppressed in which praxis is achieved through comgination of action and reflection. Translated, leaders in schools are people who can generate movement toward defensible goals in the field (schools and school-related environments) and defend their action with logic and evidence in open debate in seminars with others interested in school change.

In programs for which I have some responsibility that are designed to prepare school leaders, four components of leadership are stressed: - (1) intellectual presence, (2) ability to contend with day-to-day pragmatics of school life and, (3) competence to teach in specific fields (e.g. - bilingualism, mathematics, dramatic arts), and (4) an ability to represent a culture or a particular strand of thrust or thought. Each of these competencies relates to the concerns presented previously.

A teacher with intellectual presence has a coherent world-view. That teacher is able to describe, analyze and propose solutions to all major social problems. That teacher has a solution to racism, poverty, war, environmental imbalance and that solution is feasible politically, economically, psychologically and ecologically. A teacher with intellectual competence shares his or her world view with students and debates proposals with everyone. That teacher tries to engage other adults in

public debate and that way serves as a model for students. No child is too young for such a teacher. Freedom is not harmed by strong leaders. The cause of freedom is damaged only when debate is curtailed -- totalitarianism is fostered when people are protected from ideas that they can't understand. I insist that no one should be allowed to graduate from college until they have formulated a defensible plan for world peace (poverty, etc.).

The ability of teachers to democratically lead and exercise responsible authority can only be tested in a natural setting. It is there that potential leaders learn how to interact, to develop pedagogic skills, to maintain order while respecting individual rights, to develop a sequencing of attributes so that students gain the skills that are necessary for economic, political, cultural and personal freedom.

Every teacher should have a "thing". No teacher is a renaissance person. Teachers should be encouraged to fully develop their propensities. An art teacher should be an accomplished artist or art critic, a science teacher a scientist. All good schools establish strengths through political and intellectual asymmetry. Too often school blandness is a direct result of the processes which homogenize teachers. Everybody into the osterizer.

And lastly every teacher should have a social identity. A teacher should be a black, a Chicano, a Jew, a woman, a worker

and proudly parade that identity before students. A good school is asymmetrical in social identities -- not merely contending with the grievances of the under-represented, but speaking to the excitement that the interaction of different ethnic and political groups bring to a school. The one identity a school doesn't need is the "professional," the bleached-out technocrat that disguises all of his or her unique humanity in the name of professionalism.

The how of leadership preparation is pretty much an extension of the how of any education. The graduate student carries on the projects that I have suggested for elementary and secondary school students. The difference is merely one of more depth in knowledge and greater administrative responsibility. The students in ghetto high schools learn how to be historians while their teacher learns to be administrators of history projects. Too much of current discussion about education reform deals with concern about process. The real problems, educational goals, go virtually unattended. Once we accept that education has the responsibility to generate for everyone choice and gratification in work, politics, culture, leisure, and personal relations, then the appropriate methods will follow (techniques, procedures, programs, curricula, pedagogy, etc.) and those with promise will be clearly differentiated from the crap. Only in situations where goals are indefensible, or poorly defined, does crap get confused with valuable contributions.

How do you deal with the elitism of these new educational leaders?

Leadership and elitism are not synonymous. A leader is a member of an elite, if he is better than those he leads, doesn't have to be accountable to them, and has "talents" that run-of-the-mill folks can't have. Leadership is vital to freedom. Teachers must be leaders. But their leadership is not elitist when (1) the theory of leadership is based on egalitarian thinking, (2) when the leader is appointed by the people he or she serves, (3) power is not disproportionately vested in leaders and (4) leadership is always discussed and evaluated in context of programmatic goals.

Theory of leadership

Increasingly we have been subjected to theoretical formulation in which human capacity for leadership is presented as a critical issue. The logic goes like this -- our society is increasingly complex, leadership in such a society needs special qualities, we have developed tools to determine leadership capacity. We should provide this talent with all available resources and they in turn will provide competent stewardship -- that is what a meritocracy will look like. Such a theory is anathema to me. I can't conceive of a situation of leadership that wouldn't reflect race, class and sex bias; and secondly, I can't conceive of such a gap in abilities that would require a two-class society; and lastly, I can't conceive of any pop-

ulation docilely going along with proposals that their leaders tell them it is good for them. History tells us in such instances a large and brutal police force becomes increasingly necessary.

Non-elitist leadership will become a reality when such theories are promulgated. The sneering at lower-class potentiality which is so much a part of modern social science must be actively combated in every intellectual market place. Reality is interpreted in theoretical context and when a optimistic theory of human potential (based on facts) is predominant, the need for elitist leadership correspondingly declines.

Governance and leadership

Elitism in a large measure is a breakdown of democratic governance. Elitism stems from imposition of leaders on people without their consent. This is particularly true in education where pseudo-progress and recruitment into professional status are all consummated without any advice or consent of the persons who will be subjected to this leadership. With the growing pwer of professional associations the power of the people is reduced accordingly. There is merit in mitigating tyrannies of the majority. Teachers and other professionals were terrorized by mindless emotionalism associated with McCarthyism. But this solution rests not in protecting elites from the people but rather in educating people to appreciate diversity and respect rights.

An accountab leadership would report to the public, would welcome suggestions and would honestly debate and negotiate differences.

Power and leadership

Not only does an elitist leadership refuse to account for its behavior to a citizen body, they also aggrandize power without any justification. Elitist leaders are bound by neither legitimate power (elected by leaders) or coercive power (wrested by tyrants). They have neither the patience for the former or the stomach for the latter. Elitist leaders in our society serve power systems. They, not the prince, are easy tools, swelling progress and starting scenes that ultimately are someone else's responsibility. A non-elite leader hides behind nobody's grey flannel suit, owns his ideas and debates them. The university scholar as prostitute is a subject that needs further exposition. Suffice it to say that a non-elite leader is no prostitute.

Leadership and goals

Accountability ultimately is tied to goals. If the goals are vague then leadership cannot be evaluated. The more the goals of freedom are defined the more likely the leadership will not be elitist. However, until such time, demographic criteria serves as a stop-gap measure. Elitism has race, class and sex characteristics. Drawing leadership propor-

tionately from all divisions of society -- doesn't guarantee an end to elitism -- but it sure helps.

THE WRIGHT INSTITUTE 2728 DURANT AVENUE BERKELEY CA 94704 (415) 841-9230

SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR
NEVITT SANFORD, PH.D.

27 September 1974

Dear Participant in Wright Institute Workshop/Conference on Democratic Education for American Society:

Enclosed you will find some additional materials from the three small group discussion sessions held at the Wright Institute on 26-27 July 1974. They consist of a list of the names and addresses of all participants and my own views on the origins, reactions and outcomes of the small group discussion meetings. Since this statement is from a fairly personal perspective, and because I'm sure that other people will have different interpretations of these matters, I would welcome any response you may have to the issues raised in this statement. In addition, I would appreciate your letting me know of any change in your address so that we can be certain to remain in contact. Should you want to reach me, my phone at the Institute remains (415) 841-9111.

Yours,

Martin M. Gold
Director
Project on Educational Reform
and Social Change

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Yet it is not simply this absence of the idea of objective human excellence which constitutes the tightness of the circle in which we live. For on the other side of the picture, it is not to be thought that just because the dominant intellectual position of the age is that there is no highest purpose, the public realm is in fact able to do without such a conception. The political aspect of the liberal criticism of human excellence was the belief that unfettered by 'dogmatic' and 'a priori' ideas of excellence men would be free to make the world according to their own values and each would be able to fulfill his individuality. Ideas of purpose and ideas of a highest activity were superstitious strait-jackets--not only the enemies of an objective science, but of the free play of individuality. Their elimination through criticism was the first step towards building a pluralist society. Yet pluralism has not been the result in those societies where modern liberalism has prevailed. Western men live in a society the public realm of which is dominated by a monolithic certainty about excellence--namely that the pursuit of technological efficiency is the chief purpose for which the community exists. When modern liberals, positivist or existentialist, have criticised the idea of human excellence, they may have thought that they were clearing the ground of religious and metaphysical superstitions which stood in the way of the liberty of the individual. Rather they were serving the social purpose of legitimizing the totally techonological society because at one and the same time it has been able to criticise out of the popular mind the general idea of human excellence and yet put no barrier in the way of that particular idea of excellence which in fact determines the actions of the most powerful in our society. The mark of education is claimed to be skepticism about the highest human purposes, but in fact there is no skepticism in the public realm about what is important to do.

George Grant -- "The Curriculum"

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SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR
NEVITT SANFORD, PH.D.

Democratic Education for American Society

Martin M. Gold

Travelers to America have long commented on the enormous diversity they encountered in this immense, rich country. Fascinated with the variations of region, custom, climate and peoples, they nonetheless could not escape the temptation to speculate about the nature of the American national character, the common qualities that somehow indisoluably linked all of these disparate and conflicting sections into a whole that transcended the mere summation of its component parts. Of course, the particular characteristics that these writers ascribed to our countrymen depended not only on the keenness of their insights but on their specific personalities and backgrounds as much as the changing social landscape of the New World. Comparing de Tocqueville's Democracy in America (1835) with Mrs. Frances Trollope's Domestic Manners of the Americans (1827) or even better, with de Crevecoeur's Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America (1783) simultaneously illuminates the problems and vagaries inherent in this type of cultural generalization while also illustrating the brilliance of the observations European travelers have made about America and her citizens.

Discussions about the meaning of America also preoccupied people at home as well as travellers from abroad and for at least the first half century of our existence public occasions like Fourth of July orations were inevitably devoted to extended consideration of life in the new republic and the nature of her democratic institutions. This widespread curiosity about our egalitarian experiment with self government is not difficult to explain. This was, after all, an historical experience without precendent in the modern world, and its uniqueness was not overlooked by either sympathetic or hostile witnesses to this new form of civil society. By the late nineteenth-century, however, much of this earlier discussion had been stilled by the urgent need to assimilate the great influx of new immigrants from eastern and sourthern Europe. To a significant degree the "melting-pot" image which facilitated this process was a substitute for the passionate attempts that had previously been made to define the national character, but now as we approach America's bi-centenial it might serve us well to revive these considerations of who we are as a people and as a nation. What is the heritage bequeathed to us by our revolutionary past that brought into existence the first and most continuous republic of modern times? What has been the legacy of a society that declared its dedication to freeing itself from the incudus of the past,

a society that believed in the abolition of privilege yet recognized the need for individuals to assume the responsibility for their own and their society's destiny? Do we still have a commitment to such shared values? If so, what is the nature of those goals we hold in common?

My own interest in such matters may well be prompted by professional concerns I have as an historian. I am convinced that the study of history could be of help in addressing questions of the sort we have raised because those who study change in the past can illuminate the process by which a society has arrived at its present circumstance and suggest the possibility of various alternatives for the future. I think this is particularly true in exploring the complex area where educational and social issues interface. Indeed, at a time when our social vision has become so narrowed that we tend to take present organizational arrangements for granted and assume that things have always been much the way they are today. For this reason it is important to point out the relatively recent historical origins of the present educational system. For example, whereas education now occupies so much of our social horizon, the fact remains that as late as 1900 only 6% of the high school age population was actually attending such institutions. Similarly, for almost all of the nineteenth-century attendance at institutions of higher education did not exceed 4% of the nation's college age population.

Some of the most significant historical research in this area has also reminded us of the degree to which educational innovations have been closely tied to certain economic developments. These studies have tied the advent of the common school in the 1840's to exigencies of the new industrial order, they have established the connection between the expansion of enterprise and the establishment of the modern university in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, and they have called attention to the relationship between theideological pressures of the Cold War and the post-war enthusiasm for educational activity. By indicating the close link between economic and educational thinking, historians have been able to point out both the advantages and disadvantages of such relationships. Their inquiries seem to show that in connecting educational achievement to advances in material prosperity, elite proponents of mass education often had quite different interests than the general populace. Many of the most reknowned public figures in the nineteenth and twentieth-century were frightened by the political, social and economic instincts of the democratic majority. In their minds, one of the main functions of American education was the inculcation of certain attitudes that defended the sanctity of private property, the legitimacy of the contemporary social order, and the existing unequal distribution of power and resources. On the other hand, whatever their motives and whatever one's own sympathies are on such issues, it must nonetheless be acknowledged that those early leaders helped to create a system that has

produced impressive material and intellectual benefits to substantial portions of the American people. Without denying that mobility has been real but far more limited than we had been led to believe, and while admitting that even those who have done well in education have paid a price, it would be unreasonable to contend that nothing of value has emerged from the present system or that its complete bankruptcy is self-evident.

Part of my purpose in setting up the July workshop/conference was to examine the intimate relationship I believe exists between such educational successes and failures. The importance of this endeavor had become evident to me the last two years when I had been doing extensive travel around the country in conjunction with a United States Office of Education (USOE) project on which I was working. Almost everywhere I visited I encountered extremes of despair or exhilaration about education, yet among the many individuals and groups I met there was virtually no coherent standard by which they judged their own or others' achievements. Admittedly, in all too many cases I found the kind of confusion between educational and social issues which Jencks and his Harvard colleagues have analyzed in Inequality, and it seemed as if their was a kind of universal frustration with recent educational reform because it had not induced the social changes many people desired. This inability to meet the expectations of its most ardent supporters had simultaneously served to discredit the utility of education as a mechanism for social change while confirming the necessity of pursuing educational objectives which were not simply identified with political and economic justice.

I had hoped that the Wright Institute meeting could address itself to such complex issues. Working together I thought we could profitably consider the possibility that American society is organized in such a way that it cannot afford greater social mobility or a more equitable distribution of power and wealth; Studs Terkel's book on Working suggests, after all, that few if any Americans find much satisfaction in their jobs. If this were the case, what is the role of education in maintaining the status-quo? If it is not capable of redressing the legitimate grievances of many of our citizens, does education manage to reinforce the conflicts that originate from distinctions of class, race, sex, age or ethnicity? Can it serve to counteract the homogeneity that now characterizes so much of our lives?--think, for instance, of the fact that Ph.D's represent about 1% of the total American population but for those of us who work in insitutions of higher education scarcely any of our friends and acquaintances don't possess their doctorates. In essence, I wanted to see if we might begin to pursue different educational goals, ones that were frequently the subject of reformist rhetoric if not the object of pedagogical practice: Believing that efforts to

reconceptualize the purposes and methods of educational innovation had not been seriously undertaken, I wanted to offer an opportunity for a public discussion of alternative strategies to build towards this end.

Other considerations also entered into the decision to hold the workshop/ conference. I wanted to coordinate this Wright Institute meeting with similar USOE endeavors held in the past presently underway elsewhere in the nation (more precisely, a conference which some of you had participated in this summer as well as a couple of historians' meetings held in Boston over the last few years). Moreover, as a recent arrival to the Wright Institute, I wanted an occasion to meet those associates of my colleagues here whom I had not yet gotten to know. Finally, I felt it would be of some value to bring together as a group those of you whom I had become acquainted with as individuals so that we could address a set of problems in which I recognized certain common interests.

To facilitate the kind of interaction I envisioned, I solicited a number of you to prepare essays on some of the issues about which I was concerned. To my delight, and apparently to the satisfaction of most other participants as well, the papers distributed for the workshop/conference lived up to my expectations and proved to be thoughtful inquiries into these matters. Marcia Perlstein wrote a piece which pointed out that schools are organized to serve adults, not children, that they maintained students under enormous competitive pressures, and that they forced us to live in constant fear of failure. Complementing Marcia's call to free ourselves of competitive mold and thus break the chain of failure, Harold Dent's description of the nature of the resistance to such changes was most helpful. He reminded us that recent conflicts over education resulted in many ways from the fact that the status-quo was supported by those individuals and groups who benefitted from it; those content with the distribution of power in contemporary society do not necessarily want systematic change, they like the present organization and only favor those changes which will make it run more efficiently. Taken together, I believe that both papers constitute a powerful critique of an educational system that attends to a narrow range of skills and that denies adequate rewards to many of the people who are involved in it.

In contrast with Perlstein and Dent, Richard Rodriquez and Anne Taylor wrote papers that examined the loses sustained by those who are apparently the winners of the intense competition consciously generated by schools and colleges. Even those who have obtained the highest marks of academic success have paid a heavy price for their triumphs, often sacrificing the desire for greater social interaction and more vital communication with one's fellows for the sake of their private accumulation

of pedagogical capital. It is hardly surprising, in this regard, to discover that many professionals use business metaphors to describe their training since the educational experience so closely parallels the rigors of economic activity. To my mind, their essays posed critical questions about the relationship and responsibilities of experts to the society that subsidized them and to the culture that nutured them.

The lack of easy answers to these difficult problems became readily apparent from the papers prepared by Peter Marin and Arthur Pearl. Peter indicated the terribly constricted limits of our educational thought, highlighting the degree to which dissension over educational issues really masks more fundamental ideological disagreements. Contending that institutionalized schooling inevitably subjugates the imagination to the demands of empire, he persuasively attacked the state and its agents who try to subjugate those who seek liberation of the mind and experiment with alternative modes of learning. Although using quite a different idiom, Art addressed many of the same issues as Peter did. He exposed the sham of much recent educational reform, illuminating the connection between pedagogical and social conservatism, and establishing the necessary continuity between educational means and ends. Even more explicitly than the authors in the earlier sessions, these two writers brought to the fore precisely those controversial but largely ignored issues that stimulate so much conflict when they are finally addressed in public. Without coming to any widely accepted conclusions, their essays galvinized peoples' concern and symbolized the battles that must still be waged by the partisans of change.

The quality and value of all the papers was demonstrated throughout the workshop/conference. Enthusiasm remained remarkably steady during the entire meeting, confirming my impression that participants welcomed the chance to confront such significant problems. There seemed to be a general desire to avoid details of group process that might have been a diversion from this highly charged content and an appreciation of the opportunity to grapple with substantive matters of some importance.

As an organizer of the meeting, I tried to sustain that energy while remaining responsive to the changing needs of the participants. We tried to be flexible, redoing the small groups, restructuring the plenary session arrangements and accommodating the rhythms of interaction which developed during the three sessions. In my own mind, one of the main purposes of the workshop/conference was to further such interaction between individuals working on similar problems in different settings. Indeed, this process of exchange actually took precedence over any attempt at consensus or resolution of the large substantive questions raised by the papers. Those writings and the introductory remarks by the authors before each session clearly

served their intended purpose because the discussions appeared to be vigorous, thoughtful and illuminating. During the course of the small groups, solid contacts seemed to be establised among the participants and the basis laid for a more solid and continuous relationship in the future.

I believe that the recognition of mutual interests and an appreciation of the common concern was a remarkable achievement for a group that was so diverse in age, sex, race and occupation. Nor do I think that those beneficial results were vitiated by the confrontation between Peter and Art in the final session. On the contrary, despite the real disagreements that surfaced from the flaring of tempers, I was impressed by the fact that the discussions revolving around these two men arrived at strikingly similar conclusions in the end about the nature of the activities to be pursued and the methods to be adopted in that cause.

From the feedback I received at the Wright Institute, and from the subsequent communication I have had with some of you, I gathered that there was a general feeling that the workshop/ conference had been a worthwhile experience. I felt that we had begun to be more systematic in our thinking about education, facing up to the promiscuous use of words like change and reform in most contemporary discussions of the issue and insisting upon the need to define goals and relate our activities to them. While identifying some of the obstacles to effective action, there was a willingness and desire to reaffirm our continuous support for the causes we shared. My belief is that the Wright Institute meeting represented another step in the effort to maximize our impact on the educational system, combining and consolidating our resources for the struggles ahead. My hope is that this was just an initial phase of a long process, that it signals the rekindling of hope and not the triumph of despair.